

Śaraṇam Prapadye

Proceedings of the Seminar on *Śaraṇāgati*



Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute

G.D. Somani School Building

Cuffe Parade, Mumbai 400 005

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General Editor:
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(Shri Gadi P.B. Ananthacharya Swamijij)

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**In
Memory
of**

Smt. Chandrakala Devi Somani

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PREFACE

All *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śaiva* and *Śākta* philosophies-and-theories which simultaneously developed into the *Sampradāya* (i.e. as the religious movement in the mainstream of Hinduism) had ‘*saraṇāgati*’ as an important integral component in their pathway to God, either as a means or as an end or as both. Being a universal theme ‘*saraṇāgati*’ is discussed pretty elaborately in our scriptures such as the *Upaniṣad*-s, the *Gītā*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Pāñcarātra*, *Bhaktisūtra*-s, *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* and other *Purāṇas* besides the literature produced by each of the *Sampradāya*-s.

The spiritual aspirant’s, faults and vices, insufficiency and inability, ignorance and self-enticing fetters make man aware of his frailty and finitude. As a consequence, he feels lacking in confidence, lost and forlorn. Besides this, the thought of countless sins of commission and omission, committed during the present and previous lives have very depressing, demoralizing and deluding effect on the psyche of the spiritual seeker. The very idea of wiping away of all sins and presenting oneself as purified spirit calls forth the need for performance of untold quantum of purificatory and expiatory rites. The feeling of being useless, undeserving and unearning the grace and favour of God may stray a man away from the path of spiritual endeavour.

Fortunately, in Indian theologies of *Śaiva*, *Vaiṣṇava* and *Śākta* traditions, the Supreme Reality (God/Goddess) is conceived as full of *vātsalya* (love and care like mother) and *dayā-karuṇāmūrti* (i.e. personification of kindness and mercy), who is ever ready to welcome, embrace and protect the erring souls in his vast umbrella of shelter. He, like a compassionate mother, ignores and overlooks their vices, faults, insufficiencies,

errors and sins, if the soul surrenders itself totally and unconditionally at His feet.

Prapatti, therefore, is an act of complete self-surrender, unconditionally, at His feet with unswerving faith and reliance on God's Grace. It thus, is a way of salvation, a means to win the heart and grace of God. *Prapatti* as a means is hinted in the *Vedānta-sūtra* III.2.34. *Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*-s declare that "God reveals Himself only to those, whom he chooses"; while *Śvetāśvatara* goes a step further to teach that a seeker "desirous of attaining emancipation, ought to seek refuge". In the *Gītā*, the message and efficacy of *prapatti* is extolled like a thread running through all beads. *Prapatti*-pathway is preached in the beginning, in the middle and in the end message of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Thus, *prapatti* is compared with a thread that runs through all beads in a necklace and holds them together. Of course, the *Bhāgavata* and the *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Pāñcarātra* texts are the major texts elaborating and emphasizing the role and importance of surrender (*prapatti*) in winning Grace of God and thereby salvation. The *Ālvārs* and *Nāyanmārs* of South India and the saint-poets and minstrels of God from North India have sung the praise of *prapatti* in their devotional composition and love-filled lyrics unto God. The *Ācārya*-s of Vedāntic *Vaiṣṇava* and *Śaiva* schools have made *prapatti* an integral part of spiritual *sādhana* and therefore, have discussed it with specific insistence suitable to their philosophical theses.

All these considerations led us, to organize a Seminar on 'Śaraṇāgati' in 2002 and publish the papers as Seminar proceedings. The Seminar was a great success, representatives of various denominations of Hinduism. The participated papers culled herein are very well-studied articles prepared by the scholars in their specific areas. However, the views or standpoints expressed therein are of the writers of the papers. The publishers have incorporated them as they are, without any suggestion of disagreement.

I, as the general editor of this volume, thank all the scholar-contributors of the papers, both personally and on behalf of the A.I.R. Institute, for their whole-hearted contribution. I deem it my duty to express my sincere gesture of thanks to Shri. S.B. Somani (President A.I.R. Institute) and Shri Shrikant Somani of Chandrakala Devi Memorial Charitable Trust for generous financial assistance towards the publication of this volume.

I convey my sincere thanks for the co-operation of my colleagues especially Dr. N.B. Patil and Dr. K.K.C. Lakshmi Narasimhan for proof-reading and carefully examining the text, and also Shri A. Bharadwaj for computer-typesetting and preparing DTP text and page-making. Our office-registrar Shri. V. Balasubramaniam, who helped in dealing with the press and printing requirements deserves to be thanked particularly.

Lastly, I thank the owner Shri K. S. Varadachari and the staff of the Safe-run Press for doing the excellent printing job, in time.

I am glad to express my thankful indebtedness to Shri Raju Pillai, the owner of Vijay Printing Press who whole-heartedly undertook the task of printing and gifting the book-covers as a gesture of help to the Institute.

Ramesh M. Dave
Director

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SHRI. GADI P.B. SRINIVASACHARYA

Śaraṇāgati is the best, the flawless and the swiftest means, for, it is of the Supreme One; whereas other means concerned with human efforts may not be successful for, such efforts are subject to a number of flaws such as illusion, false knowledge, carelessness. Moreover, the human efforts cause diminution in the achievement of the goals on account of thought of doer (*kartṛtva*) causes *ahankāra*, which in turn causes all sufferings. In addition, it is against soul's nature of being dependant (*pāratantrya*).

In the statement '*Tasmāt nyāsamesām tapasāmatiriktamāhuḥ*' of *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, the term '*nyāsa*' means *śaraṇāgati* which is the best among various forms of penances (*tapas*).

Śaraṇāgati involves both *śaraṇya* (refuge) and *śaraṇāgata* (surrenderer). The statement '*Kṛpāvān śaktimāṁśca śaraṇyah*' emphasizes both the qualities i.e. *kṛpā* (mercy) and *śakti* (ability) of *śaraṇya*. *Kṛpā* here means that the Lord becomes sympathetic-merciful towards the suffering soul, removes all his problems and offers what he requires. The Supreme Lord is capable of doing all these for, He is also *śaktimān*. *Ākiñcanya* (not having anything) and *agati* (refugeless) are the nature of *śaraṇāgata* i.e. he is without any other means of both sentient and insentient. The *Parama Ācārya* (Yāmunācārya) had already stated '*akiñcano'nyagatiḥ śaraṇyah*'. *Śaraṇya* is independent (*svatantra*) and He does not require anything; whereas *śaraṇāgata* is dependant on the Independent One. Therefore, *śaraṇāgati* becomes inevitable to the soul.

The phrase '*śaraṇāgati*' consists of three components viz. *śaraṇa*, *ān* (*upasarga* = prefix) and *gati*. The term '*gati*' is derived from the root '*gamḥ gatau*'. All roots having the meaning equal to '*gati*' (movement) may be taken to mean '*buddhi*' (knowledge) as per the rule '*gatyarthāḥ buddhyarthāḥ*'. Here the term '*buddhi*' is not common knowledge but it is applied to special knowledge that creates firm faith (*mahāviśvāsa*) in the mind of the *jīva*.

The term '*prapatti*' consists of two components '*pra*' (*upasarga*) and the root '*pada gatau*'. The *upasarga* (prefix) i.e. '*pra*' meaning 'excellence' conveys the concept of the knowledge promoting firm faith (*mahāviśvāsa*) following the same rule i.e. '*gatyarthāḥ buddhyarthāḥ*'. It is noteworthy that Pillāilokācārya, while interpreting the phrase '*māmekam śaraṇam vraja*', takes the meaning of *buddhi* for the word '*vraja*' ('*vraj*' to go).

The term *śaraṇāgati* is interpreted as '*śaraṇam iti āgatiḥ, āgatiśca āgamanam*'. It means to resort to the Supreme One without approaching any other means. This is called '*Mahāviśvāsa*'. One should remember the words of the *Śaraṇya* i.e. Kṛṣṇa (*sarvadharmān parityajya*). Just as a *sannyāsin* gives up everything, the *jīva* should give up everything including *vāsanā*. Tirumalicaī Ālvar too insists the same (*maṇantum purantolā māntar*).

Jñātam mayā vasiṣṭena purā gitaṁ mahātmanā /

Mahatyāpadi samprāpte smartavyo bhagavāniti //

Draupadī's remembrance of the Lord also indicates her *mahāviśvāsa* but not mere thought of the Lord. Draupadī gave up all her personal efforts to protect her, and surrendered herself to the Lord. This is indicative of the significance of her *mahāviśvāsa* that the Lord would certainly protect her. It is to be noted that even *mahāviśvāsa* results, when reliance on self-efforts by the *śaraṇāgata* is completely given up.

Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam /

Rakṣiṣyātīti viśvāsaḥ...

Here too, the term *viśvāsa* does not mean ordinary faith but *mahāviśvāsa* in the Supreme One.

Tvamevopāyabhūto me bhaveti prārthanāmatih /

Śaraṇāgatirityuktā...

Here the term '*matī*' meaning *buddhi* is not *buddhi* in common parlance, but it indicates *mahāviśvāsa*.

This is also observed in case of Gajendra. The efforts of both elephant and crocodile are equal, each one aiming at its goal i.e. escape from the grip of crocodile in the former and to haul the elephant in the latter (*gaja ākarṣate tīre grāha ākarṣate jale*). When the elephant realized the futility of its efforts and it, after emergence of *mahāviśvāsa* on the Protector, gave up his efforts and called him out uttering His name. Its *śaraṇāgati* became fruitful.

In the aforesaid instances, the concept of *śaraṇāgati* becomes clear. *Svapravṛtti-nivṛtti* (unreliance on self-efforts) yields good result for, *svapravṛtti* is obstacle in *bhagavat-pravṛtti* (right efforts towards the Lord). One may conclude that *śaraṇāgati* results only in the state of *svapravṛtti-nivṛtti* which is an obstacle⁴ in *bhagavat-pravṛtti*.

Let us take the episode of the crow-demon (Kākāsura).

Sa pitrā ca parityaktaḥ suraiśca samarśibhiḥ /

Trin lokān samparikramya tameva śaraṇam gataḥ //

The crow made all its efforts to save itself by hunting around and search right refuge from all the three worlds. When it realized the truth that its efforts are in vain, it reached the place of *śaraṇya* (i.e. Rāma) physically, but it did not resort to Rāma with *viśvāsa*. However, even this much act of seeking refuge helped in saving its life. According to Piḷḷailokācārya, it is on account of the presence of Sītā (incarnation of Śrī) whose *puruṣakāra* is very essential in *śaraṇāgati*.

The act of Vibhīṣaṇa's *śaraṇāgati* stands as the best example of *śaraṇāgati*. Here, all the features of *śaraṇāgati* i.e. nature of *śaraṇya*, nature of *śaraṇāgata* and the salient features of *śaraṇāgati* are equally laudable.

Sarvadharmāmśca santyajya sarvakāmāmśca sākṣarān /

Lokavikrāntacaraṇau śaraṇam te'vrajam vibho //

This concept of *śaraṇāgati* of Rāmāyaṇa fulfills all the features of *śaraṇāgati* entailed in the *vidhi-vākya* of Kṛṣṇa i.e.

Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja /

Ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ //

Vibhīṣaṇa-śaraṇāgati reflects the efforts of both *śaraṇya* and *śaraṇāgata*. Vālmiki details every aspect in this context through his brilliant words of expression. The phrases '*tyaktvā putrāmśca dārāmśca*' indicates the message of *sarvadharmā-parityāga*, the first essential step in *śaraṇāgati*; the statement '*khasṭha eva vyatiṣṭhata*' expresses Vibhīṣaṇa's nature of being in good condition; the statement '*sarvaloka śaraṇyāya*' indicates the *śaraṇya*'s nature of being refuge for all; the phrase '*upasthitam nivedayata*' speaks of the significant aspect of *śaraṇāgati* i.e. *puruṣakāra* (mediator). The verb '*nivedayata*' in causative form (*nijanta-prayoga*) of the verbal root '*vidhi lābhe*' expresses the concept of *puruṣakāra* i.e. Vibhīṣaṇa requests Sugrīva and others to inform Rāma about the arrival and

intention of Vibhīṣaṇa. Thus, Vālmīki speaks of the nature and acts of *śaraṇāgata*.

Further Vālmīki illustrates the nature and duties of *śaraṇya*. The phrase '*doṣo yadyapi tasya syat*' clearly speaks of two aspects – 1) the nature of *śaraṇāgata* together with his flaws (*doṣa*) and 2) the nature of *śaraṇya* in terms of overlooking the flaws of *śaraṇāgata* or to take the same as *bhogya*. The phrases '*sarva-bhūtebhyaḥ*' and '*abhayaṃ*' indicate the firm decision of the *śaraṇya* which is confirmed further by another statement '*dadāmyetad vrataṃ mama*'. In essence, *śaraṇya*'s duty (*kartavya*) is *śaraṇāgata-rakṣaṇa*. Thus, Vibhīṣaṇa's *śaraṇāgati* stands as the best example.

One may safely conclude that, the philosophy of *śaraṇāgati* involves the nature and efforts both of *śaraṇya* and *śaraṇāgata* besides all the *dharma*s concerned with.

Śaraṇāgati– in Various Theistic Philosophies of India (Keynote Address)

DR. K.K.A. VENKATACHARI

Friends,

I am again before you after a year. I have said, more than once, from this platform that seminar raises my spirits and I feel energetic for the year.

It is customary to invite a veteran scholar to deliver a keynote address. But this time Dr. Dave invited me and I am, feeling elated. His love and affection for me weighed more than my study of the topic of the seminar. I have accepted this invitation only because I wanted to be with you all and learn more about this *Mokṣopāya*, adored by every religious sect.

Now I address myself to the job assigned to me viz. striking the keynote.

Śaraṇāgati, as the word indicates is a state of absolute submission. – Absolutely surrendering of oneself. It has its roots in our evolution. We can trace it back to animal kingdom. When a cur gets surrounded by hostile dogs, all barking at it, the lone dog shows all the physical signs of *Śaraṇāgati*. It stands crest fallen, with its tail drooping low and perhaps, wagging in submission. It has neither mood, nor courage to assert itself and it falls at the mercy of the overpowering team of dogs. The strongest among them is demanding its total submission. Often, instances in other animal groups can be cited.

Among the humans, the concept of *Śaraṇāgati* has its origin in war. When one of the parties in a war, get battered and vanquished, it has to reconcile with the situation by expressing its *Śaraṇāgati*. Thus, a vanquished king had to fall low, bow before the conqueror, and obey his commands.

The concept was elaborated in *Dharmaśāstras* and *Śaraṇāgati* was considered as an aspect of human attitude towards a person who has taken refuge at one's feet. He was to be released from fear. That is to say *abhaya-dāna*. No fear should ever hang on the person who surrenders himself. He was to be taken care of by the person to whom he had surrendered himself.

In the epics, the most notable instance is of Vibhīṣaṇa's *Śaraṇāgati*. Vibhīṣaṇa advises Rāvaṇa to send back Sītā to Rāma and extend a hand of friendship. Rāvaṇa refuses to do so and rebukes Vibhīṣaṇa, as a black sheep in the family and a destroyer of the great *Kula*. Vibhīṣaṇa had no other go but to leave his brother and the city of Lāṅkā. Four other *rākṣasas* accompanied him. When the party came flying from Lāṅkā, the warriors in Rāma's camp got disturbed. Sugrīva and other commandants in Rāma's Camp identified Vibhīṣaṇa and were apprehensive of his intention. They went by the normal rules of human behavior and were at a loss to know, why a brother will leave his elder brother when the latter was facing grave situation, as of a war. They apprehended that Vibhīṣaṇa would attack Rāma. At this juncture, Vibhīṣaṇa loudly calls Sugrīva and others, and says that he was Rāvaṇa's younger brother. He did not approve what Rāvaṇa did to Rāma and his advice to extend a hand of friendship to Rāma was rejected by Rāvaṇa. Not only that, he was threatened by the latter with death. Therefore, he left his brother and now he wanted a refuge at the feet of Rāma. He requested Sugrīva to take him to Rāma. Sugrīva, goes to Rāma and narrates him what Vibhīṣaṇa had said.

Everyone in the camp was against accepting Vibhīṣaṇa as that would mean entertaining a person from enemy's camp. It could prove dangerous. So all the ministers were against this move. Hearing all of them, Rāma said, whatever the dangers you have pointed out in entertaining Vibhīṣaṇa are to me no dangers. We do not belong to the *Rākṣasa Kula* and therefore their modes of behavior wont affect us. Nor are we interested in meddling with kingdom. We have nothing to do with that. Sugrīva was still anxious in getting Vibhīṣaṇa on their side. Rāma said "Be assured. Vibhīṣaṇa cannot do anything wrong to me. I can raise my little finger and mighty *Piśācas*, *Dānavas*, *Yakṣas* *Rākṣasas* will tumble down. Don't you know, Sugrīva, that I belong to that family of kings who offered his own flesh, to save the life of a pigeon that had taken refuge. One who falls at my feet saying that I am yours, I immediately assure him fearlessness. This has been my *vrata*. So bring him here, I have assured him protection. Let there be Vibhīṣaṇa or Rāvaṇa. I will protect them once they approach me with humility. Sugrīva was pleased at this assurance, and said, my consciousness tells me that Vibhīṣaṇa is pure and simple. Let him have the same status as ours.

The śloka “*Sakṛdeva Prapannāya*” obtains a unique place in Vaiṣṇavism. It is the *Carama Śloka* in Vaiṣṇavism having an equal status with the one in *Gītā* (18-66) (*Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja*.)

When Vibhīṣaṇa is brought before Rāma he says “I am younger brother of Rāvaṇa. I have been insulted by him. Therefore, I approach you, the one who is the last refuge of all. I have left Laṅka, my friends and my wealth, and now in you is my entire kingdom, my life and my happiness. Rāma assured him with his kind glance and asked him to tell about the war strength of the *rākṣasas*. Thereafter the entire narration is political and about the strategy.

Therefore, we can safely conclude that *Rāmāyaṇa* does not speak of *Śaraṇāgati* as a means to *Mokṣa*. *Śaraṇāgati* has not been described as leading to *Mokṣa*.

Now let us turn to another epic viz. *Mahābhārata*. In the *Sabhāparvan* (68-41) when Draupadī was disrobed by Duśśāsana, she thinks of Kṛṣṇa and says – “Vasiṣṭha has said earlier that Lord Hari should be remembered when one is in great distress” She remembered Kṛṣṇa again and again and entreated him to protect her – *prapannām pāhi govinda kurumadhyevasidatim*.

Here also, the *prapatti* of Draupadī was only to provide her with garments and not *mokṣa*. Here also it is specifically mentioned that Draupadī’s only need of the moment was *vastra*.

In the episode of *Khāṇḍavadahana*, we come across a situation when Māyāsura was escaping from the home of Takṣaka. Seeing him thus, Agni, knowing that he was the great architect of the Dānavas, wanted to devour him. So on the one hand Agni was sweeping on him and on the other Kṛṣṇa was down on him with his Sudarśana. He prayed Arjuna to save him. Here we find the prayer was for life and not for *mokṣa*. *Tam parthenashaye datte* All these instances of *Śaraṇāgati* were later evolved into spiritual *sādhana*s and were a *sine qua non* of *Mokṣa* or total liberation.

Śaraṇāgati has perhaps, a basis as old as the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* where it is mentioned *Mumukṣurvai śaraṇamaham Prapadye* - “I as a spiritual aspirant, surrender myself to you.” There are similar references in *Nārāyaṇopaniṣad* and also *Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad*. Thus, it is safe to assume that Vaiṣṇavism developed the concept of *Śaraṇāgati* independently of the *Upaniṣads*.

We may now turn to a very important *stotra* viz. *Jitante stotram* which is said to be the *khila* of *Rgveda*. In this *stotra*, we find that *Śaraṇāgati* is a means to *Mokṣsa*. (*Mokṣsopaya*) We have a commentary by Periyavāccāṇ Pillai on the first twenty *śloka*s. So also, there is one chapter of *Jitante* in one of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. Some *śloka*s of *Jitante* can be traced in *Mahābhārata*.

Now we turn our attention to Tamil literature. In *Tirukkural*, which is of 1st century AD, first chapter is *Kaḍavuḷ Vālttu* - in praise of God. Out of ten stanzas, three stanzas pertaining to salvation taking refuge under Him.

Aravāli yantanāṇ ṛālcerntārk kellar piravāli nintalaritu. Sl. 8

The feet of the Lord with the virtue-wheel,

Will help to cross the sea of birth

Piravip peruṅkaṭal nintuvar iūtāriṇaivanaṭi cerātār. Sl. 10

Those can cross the ocean of births,

Who hold God's feet, without which none.

Karratanālāya payaṇṇkol vālarivanarṛa tolā arenin. Sl. 2

What use is that learning which does not lead to worship the great of the Lord.

Almost of the same period, in *Paripāṭal* the first four stanzas are of *Tirumāl* (Viṣṇu) wherein. He is said to be the only shelter.

In Tamil Bhakti literature the signs that Nāyanmārs and Ālvārs use is "Ātpatutal", which means that those who become slave of the God. This term is used with different additional verbs giving the meaning slightly different. For example Atpututal - Al plus Patutal means becoming slave. Al + Kol means accepting him as slave. In *Mutal Thiruvantāti* of Poykai Ālvār gives the term *Ātpaṭṭāl* which means those who are slave to him- *Mutal Thiruvantāti* Stanza - 55. Ālvārs and Nāyanmārs use the word *Caran*. Kulaśekhara Ālvār uses the word *Caran* in his *Perumāl Thirumoli*. He says O Lord of Vittuvakoṭu, I don't have any other refuge except you. Hence, you remove all my difficulties. Similarly, Thirumaṅkai Ālvār says in his *Periya Tirumoli* [1-9-1] to except his as his slave. There are very important stanzas in *Thiruvaimoli* [5-7-1 and 10] in which Nammālvār says that you have given your feet as my refuge. In Stanza [6-10-10] he says not having any other refuge I came to your feet as refuge.

The word *Ātpatutal* means to become slave or interested in. Periyālvār uses the word in both the meaning and quite interestingly. *Thirupallāṇṭu* stanza 3 - if you are interested in Val [life] which

eternal, come and join our group. If you are interested only in livelihood we won't allow you to join us. Stanza 6 - 0 God, for generation we are you slave [āṭceykinrom]. Becoming slave to God that too generation after generation that is considered to be an important aspect of one's life.

Caraṇa - Nammālvār clearly says in the following stanza that *Caraṇa* is the means to attain *Mokṣa*. In 9-10-5 he says He is *carāṇa* [refuge] for those who have attained his feet. After death, he grants the *Vaikunṭha* for them.

In Śaivism, Nāyanmārs also use the same terminology. Appar in his *Tirupallmukkūṭal* says those have reached him, their Pāpas, sufferings and karma all will be destroyed. In *Cittatokai-ttirukkuruntokai* stanza 17- Those who have taken shelter under him [*carāṇa*] after death. He removes everything.

Next we can take Mānikkavācakar. In *Tiruvācakam* he composed one decad naming the decad as *Aṭaikkalapattu* which means taking refuge with him.

Thy saints like clustering lotus-flowers have joined Thy reseat foot
Mature of mind, with Thee the're gone; while I, a sinful man,
In body foul and vile remain, devoid of wisdom love,
Of mind pure. Master! Thy slave, I Thee My Refuge make.

(*Aṭaikkalapattu* - Stanza -1)

The extremity of this *aṭaikkalam* is left to the desire of the Lord or throw him into the hell[stanza-8]. Similarly Ālvārs also express the same view. From the above discussion we can draw a conclusion that in Bhakti tradition *śaraṇāgati* is the only discussion we can draw a conclusion that in Bhakti tradition *Śaraṇāgati* is the only way to attain Salvation.

Upaniṣadas and Āgamas

The Bhakti movement has the main role in the concept of *Saṅga Brahman*. Both in Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, temples and images in the temples are very important. In the Upaniṣadas, there are *vyākhyas* pertaining to *Saṅgabrahman*. Hymns of Ālvārs and Nāyanmārs, played a key role in accepting the *Āgamas* on par with Upaniṣadas. Some of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* end with *Iti Pāñcarātra Āgame mahopaniṣadi*. All the important aspects of *Śrīvaiṣṇavism* are based on *Pāñcarātra Āgama* text. The *Pañcasanskāra*, which is very important in later *Śrīvaiṣṇavism*. One can find the authority

for these five *saṁskāra* in *Pāñcarātra Āgama*. Therefore, it is a confluence of concepts of *Upaniṣads* and *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*.

Now let us see the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* in detail. There are two *Samhitās* viz. *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* and *Lakṣmī Tantra*. The *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* very clearly says - *Nyāsa* - *Śaraṇāgati* is a very secret one. As usual, in the text *Ahīrbudhnya* says not to reveal the secret. This *Nyāsa* for the *mumukṣus*, unfailing yoga or *mārga* to attain *Paramdhāma* from where there is no return. Further, that *nyāsa* yoga is having six *aṅgas*. In *nyasa*, the word *śaraṇa* signifies *sādhana* to attain *mokṣa*. Then it defines the form of *nyāsa* as follows - “I myself place all the defects - *aparādhas*. I do not have anything to offer. I do not have any other refuge. Therefore, oh Lord, you be the *upāya* to attain yourself” (please note *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* Vol. II Ch.37, *slokas* 23-31).

Similarly in *Lakṣmī Tantra* (Ch.17) deals about the *nyāsas* and their *aṅgas*, synonyms of *nyāsa* such as *nikṣepa*, *nyāsa*, *sanyāsa*-*tyāga* (Ch.17 Sl.75). Like *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* in chapter 17 of *Lakṣmī Tantra* *slokas* 59 - 82. These are all the clear evidences, which enable us to accept *Śaraṇāgati* as an *upāya*.

The next important question is how authoritative are the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. That is the reason Yāmūnācārya wrote a treatise “Authority of *Āgamas*” in his *Āgamaprāmāṇyam*. Further Rāmānuja in *Utpatti asambhava adhikaraṇa* discusses the authenticity of *Āgamas*.

I would like to conclude this paper with two *slokas* of Yāmuna.

*Na dharmanīṣṭho'smi na cātmavedī na bhaktimān tvaccaraṇāravinde/
Akiñcano'nanyagatīḥ śaraṇyah tvaṭpādamūlam śaraṇam prapadye //*

(*Sloka 22 Stotraratna*)

Oh thou worthy of being sought as refuge! I am not one established in *dharma*, nor am I a knower of the self. I have no perfect devotion for thy lotus-feet; utterly destitute and having none else for resort, I take refuge under Thy feet.

*Tvadaṅghrimuddiśya kadāpikenacidiyathā tathā vāpi sakṛtkṛto'ñjaliḥ/
Tathaiva puṣṇātyaśubhānyaśeṣataḥ śubhāni puṣṇāti najātu hiyate //*

(*Sl. 28 - Stotraratna*)

Whosoever, at whatever time, joins the palms of his hands in supplication, even on one occasion, towards Thy feet, in whatever manner, that act dispels once for all, his misfortune and fosters immense good. The act of supplication is never lost.

Śaraṇāgati (Inaugural Address)

SHRI V. RANGANATHAN

1. *Śaraṇāgati* or *Prapatti* is the cornerstone of the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* Philosophy as propounded by Bhagavad Rāmānuja. This philosophy holds that the relationship between the Supreme Soul (*Paramātmān* or *Brahman*) and the individual soul (*Jīvātman*) is the same as the relationship between the soul (*śarīrī*) and the body (*śarīraṁ*). The easiest way to attain *Mokṣa* or Bliss, both in this world and hereafter, is to surrender oneself to the Supreme Soul, that is, to perform *Śaraṇāgati*. The Supreme Soul (*Śrīman Nārāyaṇa*) is the *śaraṇya*, the object of surrender, the *jīvātman* is the *śaraṇāgata*, the subject of surrender, and *Śaraṇāgati* is the process of surrender.

2. In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, after imparting the knowledge and wisdom of *Jñāna-yoga*, *Karma-yoga*, *Bhakti-yoga* and *Sanyāsa*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not satisfied. He realizes that these methods are not easy to practice for ordinary mortals. As the Lord himself remarks :

manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścidyatati siddhaye/

“Hardly one among thousands of men strives to realize me.”¹

And again:

bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate/

Vāsudevaḥ sarvamīti sa mahatma sa durlabhaḥ//

After many births, the enlightened soul worships me, realizing that I am everything. Such a soul is very rare.²

3. Realizing that not many would be taking the paths of salvation preached by him, at the end of the final chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa suggests a very easy and simple route:

Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja/

aḥaṁ tvā sarva pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ//

“Giving up all Dharmas, just surrender to me alone. I shall absolve you of all sins. Worry not.”³ This is known as the (*Carama ślokaṁ*) and presents the distilled essence of *Śaraṇāgati*.

4. When we are travelling with heavy luggage, the moment the train reaches the destination we look for a porter. As soon as we locate the porter and entrust the luggage to him, we cease to worry about the weight and bulk of our baggage. Likewise, the Lord is our porter and, that too, one who does not charge anything. We have only to entrust our baggage to him.

To quote from the *Gita* once again:

*Ananyāścintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate/
Teṣāṃ nityābhīyuktānāṃ yogakṣemam vahāmyaham//*

The devotees who, loving no one else, constantly worship me and think of me, I take care of their security and welfare.⁴

5. The Epics *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata*, repeatedly refer to the potency of *Śaraṇāgati*. When, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the monkey army were gathered on the ocean shores waiting to cross to Śrīlāṅkā, Vibhīṣaṇa arrives seeking refuge. Suspecting this to be a ploy of Rāvaṇa, Sugrīva and Hanumān try to dissuade Rāma from giving refuge. Politely Rāma disagrees:

*sakrdeva prapannāya tavāsmīti ca yācate/
Abhayam sarvabhūtebhyo dadāmyetadvratam mama//*

I vouchsafe protection from all living beings to him who surrenders to me even once and seeks my refuge saying "I am yours". Such is my vow.⁵

For emphasis, he adds:

*ānayainam hariśreṣṭha dattamasyābhayaṃ mayā/
Vibhīṣaṇo vā sugrīva yadi vā rāvaṇaḥ svayam//*

0 jewel among monkeys, since refuge has been given to him, bring him (hither), be he Vibhīṣaṇa, or Rāvaṇa himself. Thus Rāma not only expresses his determination to give refuge to Vibhīṣaṇa but also reminds Sugrīva that he too was given refuge. Further, Rāma tells Rāvaṇa that he would also be pardoned and granted protection, were he to surrender to him.⁶

6. The gospel of *Śaraṇāgati* has been presented in a crystal clear manner by Bhagavad Rāmānuja in *Gadyatrayam*, a succinct triad of conversation pieces between Rāmānuja and the Lord. Vedānta Deśika, a great Vaiṣṇavite scholar of the thirteenth century, has composed three stotras, *Nyāsa Daśakam*, *Nyāsa Viṃśati* and *Nyāsa Tilakam* with *Śaraṇāgati* as the theme. The words, *Śaraṇāgati*, *Prapatti* and *Nyāsam* are synonymous. While *Śaraṇāgati* relieves one of all the burdens of life, it also assures a person in penury boundless wealth. As Vedānta Deśika puts it in *Vairāgya Pañcakam* :-

*nāsti pitrārjitaṁ kiñcinna mayā kiñcidājitaṁ/
Asti me hastiśailāgre vastu paitāmahaṁ dhanam//*

I have not inherited any wealth from my father, nor have I acquired any. However, I have at the top of Hastigiri the wealth of my ancestors (namely, Lord Varadarāja of Kanchipuram).⁷

7. This leads me to the manner in which the saints and the acharyas spread the message of *Śaraṇāgati* among the masses. The Lord as embodied in the idols in temples was venerated as the *Arcāvatāra* and it was through total surrender and devotion to these that abstract philosophical concepts become a living reality for the masses. For instance, the right lower hand of Lord Srinivasa at Tirupati is an unusual posture with fingers pointing downwards. This leads the devotee to surmise in *Śrī Venkateśa Prapatti* :-

*pārthāya tatsadṛśa sārathitā tvayaiva
yau darṣitau svacaraṇau śaraṇam vrajeti/
bhūyopi mahyamihatau karadarṣitau te
srivenkateśa caraṇau śaraṇam prapadye//*

As his charioteer in the Battle of Kurukṣetra. You had guided Arjuna to surrender to you. In addition, once again, you are showing to me with your hand to surrender at your lotus feet. I, therefore, surrender myself at the feet of Śrī Venkateśa.⁸ Again in *Srī Venkateśa Maṅgalāsāsanam*:

*prāyaḥ svacaraṇau pumsām śaraṇyatven pāninā/
krpayā diśase śrīmad venkateśāya maṅgaḷam//*

You are perhaps directing men with your hand to surrender at your lotus feet. Therefore, glory is to Śrī Venkateśa.⁹

8. The beauty of *Śaraṇāgati* is that it can be performed by anyone irrespective of caste creed or sex. Not only men and women, but animals, birds, trees and stone can perform *Śaraṇāgati*. Examples are Rākṣasas (Vibhīṣaṇa) and Prahlāda), Sinners (Ajāmila), Hunter (Guha), Tribal (Śabari), People in lowly positions (Sudāma, Hunchback, Mālākāra), animals (Gajendra), Birds (Jaṭāyu, the eagle, Jayanta, the Crow). Trees (Yamalārjuna) and stone (Ahalyā). *Śaraṇāgati* needs no rituals or resources. Thus, *Śaraṇāgati* affirms the infinite mercy of the Almighty and the oneness of creation.

Notes and References

- 1 *Bhagavadgītā* Ch. iii – 3
- 2 *Bhagavadgītā* Ch. vii – 19
- 3 *Bhagavadgītā* Ch. xviii – 66
- 4 *Bhagavadgītā* Ch. ix – 22
- 5 *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇam Yuddha Kāṇḍa* 18-33
- 6 *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇam Yuddha Kāṇḍa* 18-34
- 7 *Vairāgyapañcakam* 6
- 8 *Veṅkateśaprapatti* 11
- 9 *Veṅkateśa Maṅgalāśāsanam* 9

Śaraṇāgati in Upaniṣads and Bhagavadgītā

DR. N.B. PATIL

In India, two amusing similes are used to indicate one's attitude towards God. These are "like a kitten" and "like a young one of a monkey". A helpless kitten lies in a corner and just squeaks a 'miaw'. Mother comes from some where, picks it by the scruff and takes it to safety. The kitten does nothing.

In another case, a band of monkey comes scampering down a huge tree. Most of the females in the band have their babies clutching them at their bellies. However small a baby monkey might be, it will cling to its mother of its own. The mother monkey will hazardingly jump from one tree to another and the young one will hold fast its mother.

So with reference to these attitudes, the first is comparable to a person who does nothing but prays the Lord, "Oh Lord, come and save me". The second is comparable to a person who says nothing but himself is doing on his own to reach God.

These attitudes are not restricted to India but are universal. We find them in Christianity, Judaism, and in religions of Semitic origin. In Japan, these attitudes are named as *tarski* and *jiriki*. The former means "by outside strength" and the latter means "by own strength. Effort or power from within". And in Buddhism as practised in that country, these radically contrasting approaches to the achievement of enlightenment are represented accordingly in two types of religious life and thought. In India, the concept of *Śaraṇāgati* has its genesis in the Vedic concept of sacrifice. In a sacrifice the Vedic priest used to offer to Agni things, which were valuable for a good living. Instead of enjoying these things, themselves the worshiper deemed it proper to part with them by offering them to Agni, which was a tangible form of the divinity. Thus, in some of the ṛks, which have trickled down to the Upaniṣads, we find such an offering. Thus in *Īśopaniṣad* we have the *mantra* –

Vāyuranīlamamṛtamathedaṁ bhasmāntam śarīram.

Aum krato smara kṛtam smara krato smara kṛtam smara

and again the *mantra*

*agne naya supatha rāye asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān.
yuyodhyasmajjuhurānameto bhūyiṣṭhānte namauktim vidhema.*

These *mantras* indicate the supreme nature of the divinity i. e. Agni and also the uncontaminable nature of *ātman* – the occupier of human body. The Vedic poet further states, ‘Oh Agni, lead us in the right way’. Ācārya Śaṅkara in his *bhāṣya* on this *mantra* says – Agni is one who will take those, who surrender themselves to him, to a better position. It is for this reason that he is called Agni – one who takes others forward – *tvamasi samāśritānāmuddhartā* – This goes to indicate that *ācārya* views in this *mantra* the *Śaraṇāgati* of the soul or individual. Another reference to *Śaraṇāgati* is traceable in *Chandogya Upaniṣad* – (2-23-1) Here the *mantra* mentions three boughs of Dharma. One is *yajna*, the other is *adhyayan* and the third is *dānam*. The second bough of Dharma is remaining in *Gurukul* and following the strict rule of *Brahmacarya*. The third bough of *dharma* is residing in the home of *ācārya* with utmost humility. The text run.

*“Trayo dharmaskandhah yajnodhyayanam dānamiti
Prathamastapah eva dvitīyah brahmacāryācāryakulavāsi
Tritīyo atyantamātmānmācāryakule-vasādanam sarva
ete puṇyaloka bhavanti brahmasamsthā amṛtatvameti.”*

The words *atyantamātmānam ācāryakule avasadanam* positively speak of *śaraṇāgati* to the *ācārya* who is *Brahmavī* and who alone can release the disciple from the bondage of the world. In *Kathopaniṣad*, we have the mention of Yama supplicating Naciketas with all humility, that the latter should honour him by asking three boons.

In *Kathopaniṣad*, we have the mention of Yama supplicating Naciketas, with all humility that the latter should honor him by asking for three boons. In *Kathopaniṣad* 1.3.13 the description indicates that the *sādhaka* has to merge his *vāk* in mind, and here *vāk* stands for all the organs of action. All these are to be merged in mind. The mind also is to be merged in knowledge, which is in the *Ātman*. That is to say, mind is to be merged in Buddhi or intellect. Then this buddhi again is to be placed in *Ātman*. And the *Ātman* is again to be merged in *sānta ātman*. In a way, this is the process of total surrender. This *paramapuruṣa* is the only resort. The whole process is of total surrendering, and *ācārya* in his commentary rightly says – *ātmanah*

paramapuruṣe niyamanam nāma tadevāśrayatāpādanam śaraṇāgatiriti yāvat. Paramapuruṣe caiteṣvadhvanah pāramāpnoti tadviṣṇoh paramam padamiti bhāvah.

The *mantra* (VI-18) in *śvetāśvataraopaniṣad* clearly mentions *Śaraṇāgati* as is done in the *carama śloka* of the *Gītā*.

*Yo brahmānam vidadhāti pūrvam yo vai vedamśca prahiṇoti tasmai
Tam ha devāmnabuddhiprakāśam mumukṣurvai śaraṇamaham prapadye..*

In elucidating this *mantra*, *Ācārya Śaṅkara* says – He is the one who is the cause of *Samsāra* and the cause of bondage and of release. One should wholeheartedly surrender oneself to him. It is He who has created the *Hiranyagarbham*. It is He who has set in the Vedic hymns. He is the one who is all light in the Self. The only desire, which is functioning in the Self, is of the total freedom. The surrender is thus necessary for a total release from all attachments.

Let us now see what *Gītā* has to say about *Śaraṇāgati*.

Bhagavan Kṛṣṇa says in chapter VII 14 & 15 ‘*Māyā* indeed is unsurmountable. But those who will surrender themselves to me will get over *māyā*.’

Further, he says - “Only fools who are advised to do bad things won’t surrender themselves to me. It is due to the cover of *māyā* that they can not have my glimpse because they are overpowered by sentiments not befitting man. They are overpowered by sentiments such as killing and speaking the untruth.

Again *Bhagavān* says in chapter 11 – (30) that it is he who surrenders himself to me totally attains to the position of a *sādhū*. He is the one who has set him-self right on the path of realization.

Āpicet sudurācāro bhajate māmananya bhāk.

Sādhureva sa mantavyah samyak vyavasitopi sah.

In the same chapter subsequent stanzas *mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya tepi yānti parām gatim* also indicate *Śaraṇāgati*. In his commentary, *Ācārya* explains the word *vyapāśritya* as *āśrayatvena grhītā*. The idea of total surrender therefore, is a sine quo non-, for the release from the bondage. More emphasis is given in this regard in stanza 34 which, positively says *Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyāji mām namskuru. Māmevaiṣyasi muktvaivam ātmānam matparāyaṇah.. manmanā, madbhaktah, madyāji* all these words indicate that it is the total surrender that is insisted upon by God. Nothing short of total surrender is going to lead to one’s

emancipation. God assures a refuge to one who surrenders totally to Him. The last word regarding the total surrender is the well-known stanza (18.66)

Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja.

Aham tvā sarva pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucah.

While elucidating this stanza, ācārya Śaṅkara says that *dharma śabdena atra adharmopi grhyate, naiṣkarmya vivakṣitatvāt nāvīrato duṣcaritāt tyaja dharmam ca ityādi śruti smṛtibhyah – sarvadharmān parityajya sanyasya sarvadharmāni ūyeta. Mām ekam sarvātmānam samam sarvabhūtasthitam īśvaram acyutam garbhajanmajarāmarāṇa-varjitaṁ 'ahameva' ityevam śaraṇam vraja, na mattah anyat asti iti avadhāraya ityarthah.*

So Śaraṇāgati is a cogent concept in spiritual realization and we find this concept in almost all religious literature right from the *Vedas* to *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtra* and *Bhagavadgītā*. A clear understanding of this concept is a sine quo non of a spiritual life.

Śaraṇāgati in Śrī Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa

DR. C. UMAKANTHAN

Vedas are the perennial source for the upliftment of people from the clutches of *Samśāra*. *Vedānta*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas* and *Ālvārs'* hymns are explaining the inner truths of Vedas in a larger way. In this, *Śrīmad Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, otherwise called *Dirgha Śaraṇāgati*, is the essence of experience of characters as portrayed by Śrī Vālmiki.

Śaraṇāgati as a *Brahma Vidyā* admits into its fold all beings without distinctions of caste, creed, colour, sex, gender, rank or order of life as explained in *Bharadvāja Samhitā*¹.

Among the two important *Itihāsas*, *Rāmāyaṇa* is called the golden bed-rock for *Śaraṇāgati-Vidyā*. It is an explanation and narration of one of the thirty-two *Brahma Vidyas* namely *Nyāsa Vidyā* or *Śaraṇāgati*². It can be perceived from the two perspectives namely *Siddhopāya* or the God as a refugee to attain the goal of realization and *Sādhyopāya* or *Śaraṇāgati* as a means of taking refuge to attain the goal of realization of God.

Śrī Rāma as Siddhopāya

In *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Siddhopāya* aspect of Lord Rāma is asserted to prove that Rāma as the Supreme *Brahman*. Rāma, however, conceals His identity as *Śrīman Nārāyaṇa* and convinces others that He is an ordinary human being, though His real nature is asserted by the Devas including Brahmā after the death of Rāvaṇa.

Establishment of Rāma as Supreme by Brahman and others

Brahmā declares that Rāma is the Supreme *Śrīman Nārāyaṇa* with Śrī, the disarmed and all pervading and He did *Varāha Avatāra* and He is conqueror of all enemies in the past and in future; He is the indestructible and truthful Supreme *Brahman* who is in the middle and the end of the worlds; He is the supreme supporter

of the worlds; He is the four armed Viṣvaksena; He is the Lord of senses; He is the Being; and Supreme Being. The Divine Sages declare that He is the refugee and refuge; Sītā is Goddess Lakṣmī and He is Lord Viṣṇu.³

Even Tārā, wife of Vāli also says of Rāma that He is the abode for noble, like a tree for the birds; the only protection for the people in distress and refuge of all the troubled people; and He is the only repository of the fame.⁴

Leaving the court of Rāvaṇa, Vibhiṣaṇa who takes refuge at the feet of Rāma, remarks as follows : “*Sarvaloka śaraṇyāya rāghavāya -mahātmane*” which means that Śaraṇya – Rāghava is the refugee to those living souls and creatures in seven worlds *Bhū, Bhuva, Suva, Maha, Jana, Tapa, Satya* and seven worlds *Atala, Vītala, Sūtala, Talātala, Rasātala, Mahātala* and *Pātāla* existing down the earth.⁵

At the death-bed of Rāvaṇa, his wife, Maṇodārī, by her sheer virtue, says that Rāma is the great Sage manifested; He is the Supreme Being, the very ancient one; and He is the greatest of the great.⁶

In the Court of Daśaratha in Ayodhyā, Viśvāmitra entered and having received rousing reception from Daśaratha, he informed the purpose of his visit, particularly to perform *Yāga* in a peaceful manner. To achieve this, he requested Daśaratha to send Rāma along with him for ten days. Having listened to his request, Daśaratha, though he had assured earlier for compliance of any request, was taken aback for sometime because of his attachment to Rāma. At that time, Viśvāmitra highlighted the significant traits of prowess and greatness of Rāma in the *śloka*, particularly for the word ‘*Mahātma*’.⁷

The Influence of Śaraṇāgati in Rāmāyaṇa

All the above narrations no doubt show that *Rāmāyaṇa* is an *upabṛhmaṇa* of the *Vedas* and Rāma is the *Siddhopāya* or the self accomplished Divinity. The *Śaraṇāgati - Vidyā* is well narrated and expounded in all the *Kāṇḍas* of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

In *Bālakāṇḍa*, the *Śaraṇāgati* of the *Devatās* to Lord Viṣṇu in the ocean is observed.

In *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, Bharata surrendered before Rāma in *Citrakūta*. In *Aranyakāṇḍa* the sages surrendered themselves to Rāma when demons harassed. In *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, Sugrīva seeks refuge in Rāma, who promises to redeem Sugrīva's wife and his kingdom from Vālī. In *Sundarakāṇḍa*, it is shown that Trijaṭā instigating the *rākṣasa* ladies to surrender to Sītā in *Aśokavana*. In *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, it is quite known that *Vibhīṣaṇa* belonging to the opposite camp and a brother of Rāvaṇa, surrenders before Rāma with four of his followers.⁸ Thus, it is seen that Lord Rāma as *Siddhopāya* granted the requests of all those who surrendered and fulfilled their desires.

Further, when we read the incident of Kākāsura, it is depicted in *Rāmāyaṇa* that Kākāsura (Indra's son in a crow form) committed a blunder by physically injuring and hurting Sītā when Rāma was sleeping in the lap of Sītā. This enraged Rāma attacked Kākāsura with a blade of grass and ultimately Kākāsura fell at Rāma's feet helplessly. The crow's father Indra abandoned his son as he could not interfere in the matter against the arrow of Rāma. In the same way Kākāsura wandered all the worlds and at last surrendered before Rāma who is the protector. Sītā who was by the side of Rāma, just turned the crow's head down to Rāma's feet as an act of surrender to Rāma by the crow. This act of Sītā is mentioned in *Padmapurāṇa* only. This was narrated by Sītā to Hanumān when he met Her in *Aśokavana*; Vālmikī lucidly narrates this incident: stating that Kākāsura, having been disowned by his father, the gods and the sages, wandered all the three worlds and took refuge in Rāma. Kākāsura deserved death but was protected because he took refuge in Rāma and fell on the ground before Him.⁹ Rāma however made him blind in one eye as a deterrent to further violence and wickedness. From the above incident, it is observed that *Śaraṇāgati* is extremely powerful which prevails in the whole of *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Importance of Vibhīṣaṇa Śaraṇāgati:

In the *Śaraṇāgati* of Vibhīṣaṇa, the basic tenets as explained in *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* is aptly suited. This was well explained by Kṛṣṇasūri in his commentary '*Tanīśloki*'.¹⁰ *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* says that one has to pray before God by admitting that one possesses all sins, no way to go; nothing to pay; hence God is the refugee.¹¹ This is also applied in Vibhīṣaṇa *Śaraṇāgati* as follows. While taking

refuge, Vibhiṣaṇa says that he is the brother of Rāvaṇa who had bad character and was the head of *Rākṣasas*.¹² This is the meaning of 'Ahamasmyaparādhānāmālayaha'. Further Vibhiṣaṇa, to gain the kingdom, came with full heart and surrendered before Rāma with empty hands.¹³ This shows his 'Ākiñcanyatvam'. Vibhiṣaṇa says that he was affected by Rāvaṇa by his harshness.¹⁴ He also says that he is not liked by Rāvaṇa and his associates.¹⁵ This shows his 'Ananyagatitvam'. According to *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* that one who knows God as *Upāya*, that knowledge is called *Śaraṇāgati*.¹⁶ In this Vibhiṣaṇa, prostrated before Rāma who is a refuge.¹⁷

Vibhiṣaṇa's *Śaraṇāgati* contains all the *Aṅgas* and *Aṅgi* of *Śaraṇāgati*. In the words of *Śūrpanakhā*, it is said, "Vibhiṣaṇastu dharmātmā na tu rākṣasaceṣṭīah". Which means Vibhiṣaṇa is *Dharmātmā* and he is one free from the wicked deeds of *rākṣasas*.¹⁸ Such a *Dharmātmā* requested his brother Rāvaṇa to give back Sītā and free from all anxiety. He expressed this in quite a number of times. The *śloka* states:

Pradiyatām dāśarathāya maithili, sitām ca ramāya nivedya devim, vasema rājanniha vītaśokāḥ. This is an illustration of the first *Aṅga* namely, *Anukūlyasankalpa*.¹⁹

Rāvaṇa's refusal to heed to Vibhiṣaṇa's advice and the latter's subsequent abandonment of Rāvaṇa when he rebukes Vibhiṣaṇa can be interpreted as the avoidance of evils i.e., *Prātikūlyavarjanam*. This is further elaborated by his rejection of all the possessions including his sons, wife and friends etc. The very abandonment of Lanka shows this *Aṅga* in the following lines "Tyaktvā putrāṁśca dārān ca rāghavam śaraṇam gataḥ", which means that he took refuge in Rāma having forsaken his wife and children.²⁰

The third *Aṅga* namely *Kārpण्या* or helplessness is traced in the utterances of Vibhiṣaṇa when he introduced himself to Sugrīva and others as follows: "I am the brother of Rāvaṇa. I have been humiliated by him and I take refuge in You, the refuge of all beings. My riches, my friends and Lanka have been abandoned by me".²¹

The fourth *Aṅga*, namely *Mahaviśvāsa* is traced in the following verse of Vibhiṣaṇa - *Sarvalokaśaranyāya rāghavāya mahātmane*.²²

Vibhīṣaṇa's faith in Rāma is firm and steadfast. This is shown by the characterization of Vibhīṣaṇa as one, who possesses great wisdom. "*Vibhīṣaṇo mahāprājñah*".

The fifth *Anga Gopṭṛvavarāṇam* consists in Vibhīṣaṇa's prayer for protection is expressed in the words "*Rāghavaṁ śaraṇam gataḥ*".

The *Angi, Ātmanikṣepa* or surrender of the self is expressed in the śloka "*Nivedayata mām kṣipram vibhīṣaṇamupasthūtam*" which means offer *Vibhīṣaṇa* to Rāma who is *Sarvaloka Śaraṇya* and also *Mahātmā* at once.²³ In the presence of *Angas*, the *Angi, Ātmanikṣepa* or *Śaraṇāgati* becomes whole. Though the chief of the camp Sugrīva advises Rāma adversely, He announces His readiness to protect even Rāvaṇa, if he surrenders for protection. Further, Lord Rāma declares that He is ready to admit into His fold even one who poses himself to be friendly and assures that He would not forget him even though there are defects in him. He states as follows:

"Mitrabhāvena samprāptam na tyajeyam kathaṇcana.

Doṣo yadyapi tasya syāt satyametadagarhitam"

which means that He will never give up anybody who approaches him with friendly attitude even if he is full of defects. This is the way of noble souls.²⁴ Thus, from the Vibhīṣaṇa's episode it is noted that his surrender besides bringing the protection from evils of his brother secured the lost Kingdom (Lāṅkā). Therefore it is concluded that in *Rāmāyana* there are number of incidents where *Śaraṇāgati* played a very useful role.

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3. C. Umakantham, *Greatness of Śaraṇāgati in Śri Vaiṣṇavism*, Omkumar Publications, Tirupati, 2001.

Notes and References

- ¹ *Bharadvāja Samhita*: *Na jātibhedam na kulam na liṅgam na guṇakriyāḥ / na deśakālau nāvastham yogo yayamapekṣyathe // brahmakṣatriya viśvadrāḥa strriyaścāntarajanyaḥ /*

Sarva eva prapadyeāraṇa sarvadhātūraṇaṁ acyutam ||

² *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 79.

³ *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 120, 13-15.

*Bhavan nārāyaṇo devaḥ śrīmān cakrāyudho vibhuḥ /
ekaśṛṅgo varāhasṭvam bhūtabhavyasapatnajit //
akṣaram brahma satyam tvam madhye cāṇṇe ca rāghava //
lokānāṁ tvam paro dharmo viśvakṣeno caturbujah //
śāringadhanvā hrīṣīkeśaḥ puruṣaḥ puruṣottamaḥ //
śaraṇyam śaraṇam ca tvāmāhurdivyamaharṣayaḥ //
sitā lakṣmaṇaḥ bhavān viṣṇuḥ.*

⁴ *Rāmāyaṇa Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, 15-19:

*Nivāsavrīkṣaḥ sādḥūnām āpannānām parā gatih //
ārtānām samśrayaścaiva yaśasaścaikabhājanam //*

⁵ *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 17-15.

⁶ *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 114, 14, 16.

*Vyaktam eṣa mahāyogi paramātmā sanātanaḥ //
anādimadhyanidhanaḥ mahataḥ paramo mahān //
mānuṣam vapurāsthāya viṣṇuḥ satyaprākramaḥ //*

⁷ *Rāmāyaṇa Bālakāṇḍa*, 19-14:

Aham vedmi mahāmānam Rāmaṁ satyaparākramaṁ //

⁸ *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa* 17-3:

*Tamātmapañcamam dṛṣtvā Sugrivo vānarādhipaḥ //
vānaraissaha durdharṣaḥ cintayāmāsa buddhimān //*

⁹ *Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakāṇḍa*, 38, 33-34.

*Sa pitrā ca parityaktaḥ suraiśca samaharṣibhiḥ //
trīṇ lokān samparikramya tamēva śaraṇam gataḥ //
sa tam nipaṭitam bhūmau saprānaih śaraṇāgatim //
vadhārhamapi kākutṣthaḥ kṛpāyā paryapālaya //*

¹⁰ *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 18-3:

*Mitrabhāvena samprāptam na tyajeyam kathaṁcana //
Doṣo yadyapi tasya syāt satyametadagarhītaḥ //*

¹¹ *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhūā*, 36, 38.

¹² *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 17-10.

¹³ *Ibid.* 17-65.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 17-14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 16-16.

¹⁶ *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhūā*, 37-30.

¹⁷ *Rāmāyaṇa Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa*, 19-2.

¹⁸ *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 9-22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 15-14.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 19-5.

²¹ *Rāmāyaṇa Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 16-15:

*Anujō Rāvaṇasyāham tena cāsmayavamānītaḥ //
Bhavantam sarvabhūtānām śaraṇyam śaraṇam gataḥ //
parityaktā mayā laṅkā mitrāṇi ca dhanāni ca //
bhavadgatam me rājyam ca jīvitam ca sukhāni ca //*

²² *Ibid.* 19-35.

²³ *Ibid.* 17-15.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 18-3.

Śaraṇāgati as Depicted in the Mahābhārata

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The *Mahābhārata* has attained an immortal status in ancient literature due to the fact that it contains the *Gītā*. The *Gītā*, which is itself termed as the *Upaniṣad*, summarizes the entire teaching of the *Upaniṣads* and emphasizes the Doctrine of *bhakti*. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is unique and divine in character because it contains the highest knowledge imparted by the Lord himself. This doctrine of *bhakti* is praised by the Lord as the king of spiritual lores (*Rājavidyā*) and the king of secret knowledge (*Rājaguhya*); it is sacred, imperishable, and excellent, involving direct experience and quite easy to follow.¹ The path of *bhakti* (devotion to our own deity) is meant for all sections of the society including women and *śūdras* and does not require any prior preparation. There are nine kinds of devotion mentioned in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* – *śravaṇa*, *kīrtana*, remembering the Lord, serving at his feet, worshiping, being His friend etc.

*Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pādasevanam.
arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātmanivedanam.*²

From the above verse it is very clear that the devotees aspire to remain at the feet of the Lord, to constantly remember Him, to sing his glories, to state before him one's feelings, to pay obeisance and to serve him all the time as a 'dāsa' (servant).

There is a purifying capacity in the devotional service to the Lord. The real seekers following the path of devotion acquire good qualities, perform always selfless actions and acquire such perfection that they can raise above the *dvandvas* (pair of opposites) of gain and loss, happiness and misery, friend and foe and praise as well as censure. This higher stage in devotion cannot be achieved unless the devotee surrenders himself completely to the Lord. *Śaraṇāgati*, which means surrendering oneself completely, out of loving devotion

to the Lord, is inherent in the above nine kinds of *bhakti*. In the *Bhakti-sūtras* of Nārada, there are eleven varieties of devotion mentioned. Whatever type of *bhakti* one may follow what is essential is that a devotee should in every respect belong to the Lord and should have self-less and unparalleled love for the Lord. *Bhakti* is defined as – [*Sā parānuraktirīśvare.*]³ ‘*parā anurakti*’ stands for highest love. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* defines *bhakti* as ‘pure love for Lord *Puruṣottama*’ and that pure love (*anurakti*) should be without any expectation or desire and it should be ‘*Nirantara*’ i.e. continuous, constant.

Ahaitukyavyavahitā yā bhaktiḥ Puruṣottame.

(*Ahaituki + avyavahitā*) ⁴

This essential aspect of *bhakti* is certainly present in *Śaraṇāgati* for without that deep-rooted affection, it is not possible for a devotee to surrender everything to his Lord and to consider Him as his only savior and master. A *śaraṇāgata* seeks the mercy of the lord, takes delight in being at His feet, in obeying his commands, in reciting his name and in remaining in his servitude. In the path of *bhakti*, a *śaraṇāgata* devotee himself surrenders to the Lord with the sole purpose of realizing God or securing final liberation. But there are instances in the *Mahābhārata* where in *śaraṇāgati* on the part of a devotee has different purpose, for instance, Draupadī seeking refuge in Lord Kṛṣṇa when she was being humiliated in the assembly of Duryodhana.

Arjuna, the Seeker : In the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa advises Arjuna, who is completely confused with regard to his duty, that he should clearly understand what is eternal and what is non-eternal and perform his duties and actions without any desire for fruit. If he follows what is termed as *Niṣkāma-karmayoga* then his actions would not create any bondage for him. Arjuna is urged to become a true and single-minded devotee of the Lord in order to achieve the goal of *mokṣa*. Lord Kṛṣṇa says – I am equally disposed to all; I envy no one, nor am I partial to any one but whoever truly devotes himself to me, such a person is in Me and I am also in him.⁵ Lord Kṛṣṇa makes

it amply clear in this chapter that he is pleased to accept whatever the devotees present to him – may be a fruit, mere water or even a leaf what is important is the intensity of love or devotion into which it is offered. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, narrates a story of Sudāma, in this connection, stating that Sudāma a very intimate friend of Lord Kṛṣṇa came to the palace and presented to Kṛṣṇa a very small gift in the form of pounded rice to Him. He was very poor and so he could not afford a better, more valuable gift. The Lord was happy to accept it and He rated it as the best gift because Sudāmā offered it with deep love and devotion. After clarifying different aspects of *bhakti*, the Lord in the Ninth Chapter of the *Gītā*, impresses on the mind of Arjuna that he should always think of the lord and thoroughly devote himself to the Lord.

Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī mām namaskuru.

Mām-evaiśyasi yuktvaītam ātmānam mat parāyaṇaḥ. ⁶

In this verse, Lord Kṛṣṇa urges him to worship Him, offer obeisance and be completely absorbed in Him; thereby he shall attain to Him. Here, it appears that the Lord has directed Arjuna to be a *śaraṇāgata* and asked him to totally surrender and seek shelter in Him. In the concluding chapter the Lord tells Arjuna to act according to His wholesome advice and that the Supreme God dwells in the heart of every individual and guides his destiny from within. Arjuna should surrender to that Īśvara completely (*tam eva śaraṇam gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata*).⁷

Thus Arjuna, who is both friend and disciple of the Lord is instructed to adopt *Śaraṇāgati*, whereby he shall certainly get enlightened and secure the eternal abode of the Lord.

In the Epic, there are references to the close friendship between Arjuna and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Because of this bond of affection, the Lord tells him finally that he should constantly remember Him, think of Him and be an ideal devotee. The Lord says – “you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are my very dear friend.”⁸ Indeed in the concluding portion of the *Gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa has shown a great concern for Arjuna and affectionately

appealed to him that he should not think of anything else; he should submit himself to Him. (*Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇam vraja*)⁹ Thus in the *Gītā*, the path of devotion is given a prominent place and even therein, the devotees are advised to adopt *śaraṇāgati* to attain their goal of ascending to the Lord's abode.

The Concept of *Ananya-bhakti* - In the *Nārāyaṇīyopākhyāna*, which is narrated in the *Śāntiparva* of the epic, it is said that sage Nārada had to perform great penance and devote himself thoroughly and intensely and then only through the grace of Lord Nārāyaṇa himself that he could have the Lord's *Darśana*. Here the Supreme Lord himself states that, He could be seen by an excellent devotee only with '*Ananya-bhakti*' (single minded devotion). Lord Nārāyaṇa is the supreme *Puruṣa*; there is no one equal to Him or higher than Him. He is eternal, imperishable, *Nirguṇa* as well as *saguṇa*, *akṣaya* and *aprameya*. He manifests himself in four forms - Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The liberated souls dwell in his abode and they possess divine, lustrous forms. In this *Upākhyāna*, Nārāyaṇa who propounds *sāttvata-dharma*, creates Rudra for conducting the destruction of the entire creation and proclaims that there is no distinction between Him and Rudra. He is identical with Rudra who has arisen from his anger. I wish to emphasize the fact that God Nārāyaṇa cannot be realized without '*ananyabhakti*'. These devotees are also called '*Ekānta-bhaktas*' - those who are constantly absorbed in Lord Hari.

Caturvidhā mama janā bhaktā evam hi te śrutam .

*Teṣu cekāntinaḥ śreṣṭhāste caivānya-devatāḥ.*¹⁰

Thus the *Ekānta* devotees are dear to the Lord and are regarded as best among the four kinds of *bhaktas*. Thus, it appears that the eternal souls living in the divine world have achieved their objective through single-minded devotion that appears to be very close to *Śaraṇāgati* or *Dāsya-bhakti*. Lord Nārāyaṇa is being worshipped by those eternal souls who are devoid of body and sense organs in His abode and the Lord, to whom devotees are very dear,

delights in their company. Nara and Nārāyaṇa (two *Rṣis*) who are the forms of the highest Lord, tell Nārada that he (Nārada) could get the divine perception of the Lord directly, because Lord Nārāyaṇa indeed, loves his devotees (*Nāsyā bhaktaiḥ priyataro loke kaścana vidyate*).¹¹

This *Sāttvata Dharma* propounded by Hari is also alternatively called as *Pāñcarātra* and it is mentioned here in this *Upākhyāna*, that this particular doctrine has been taught in the *Harigītā* by the Lord himself.¹² This reference makes it very clear that the *Sāttvata Dharma* is equivalent to what is taught in the *Gītā* by Hari (Lord Kṛṣṇa) himself.

Draupadī as a Śaraṇāgatā: Now we turn to an episode wherein Draupadī leading a poor and rather miserable life in the forest unexpectedly faces a calamity and on that occasion she surrenders herself to Lord Kṛṣṇa and seeks his divine help. I wish to mention here, that this episode of Durvāsa visiting Pāṇḍavas in the forest has been dropped in the Bhandarkar edition of the Epic. In the *Chitraśālā* edition, it is dealt with at length.¹³ Once sage Durvāsa together with thousands of disciples stayed with Duryodhana for a few days and the latter looked after him very well and rendered excellent service to him. The sage having been pleased, asked him to seek a boon. Duryodhana knew that even a small error in hospitality would have resulted in curse from the sage. He imagined that if the sage visited Pāṇḍavas in the forest they would not be able to fully satisfy him and as a result would receive his curse. Therefore, he requested the sage that he should grant him the boon that he pays a similar visit to Pāṇḍavas, living in the forest. The sage unaware of the inner motive, grants the boon. The sage accordingly, together with all his disciples visited Pāṇḍavas; Yudhiṣṭhira received him as well. Looking to the larger number of disciples, Draupadī became greatly worried; in the forest, she was living with limited means. It was simply an impossible task to feed them all. In utter distress she remembers Kṛṣṇa, the great savior and appeals to Him. She prays – Oh *Vāsudeva*,

Jagannātha, Dāsa-duhkha-nāśaka, Oh protector of *śaraṇāgata*, save me from this calamity. You are the self of the Universe, be merciful to me, oh Lord. Thus she prays and the Lord responds to her prayers. She is a seeker of shelter, a seeker of *karuṇā* and the Lord obliges. Lord Kṛṣṇa comes and partakes the last food particle from the special plate (that was granted by the Sun to Pāṇḍavas) and He was satisfied with that much food. The party of Durvāsa returned from the river and all the members felt that their hunger had vanished and they were all fully satisfied. The satisfaction of the Lord brought about this miraculous effect. Subsequently they hurriedly left the *Āśrama*, fearing that Pāṇḍavas might have become angry, due to the food being wasted. Thus, Draupadī surrenders herself fully to the Lord and receives protection from the Saviour.

On another occasion, Draupadī becomes a *śaraṇāgata* to Kṛṣṇa and entreats him to protect her. After the game of gambling, Draupadī becomes a *śaraṇagata* to Kṛṣṇa and entreats him to protect her. After the game of gambling, Draupadī was dragged to the court of King Duryodhana where she was greatly humiliated. King Duryodhana declared her to be the slave of the Kaurava King but Draupadī courageously contested the point and appealed to the assembly to give their verdict. Bhīṣma spoke and pleaded his inability to give judgment. Other honorable kings observed silence. Draupadī was crying bitterly and appealing to the Kings to come to her rescue. While harassing her, Duśśāsana dragged her and started disrobing her. At this juncture, Draupadī was utterly helpless and therefore she remembered Kṛṣṇa and surrendered herself to Him; She prayed – oh Kṛṣṇa, Govinda. I am drowned in the ocean of Kauravas, - kindly draw me out of it (*Kauravārṇavamagnām mām uddharasva Janārdana*).¹⁴

She has used the words “*prapannām pāhi*” in this prayer, which clearly means that she is a *śaraṇāgata* and is seeking complete shelter. The wicked attempt of Duśśāsana is foiled by the grace of the Lord and new garments started appearing on the person of Draupadī. All assembly members were struck with wonder when

they observed this miracle. Duśśāsana got tired and sat down and Bhīma out of great anger took the pledge of killing him and drinking his blood. This *śaraṇāgati* of Draupadī has a limited objective but it brings out her firm faith as well as the intensity of her devotion. I may add that Bhandarkar edition drops the prayer of Draupadī but retains the verses stating that different garments started appearing and the kings, seeing the miracle, were wonder-struck.

In the *Citraśāla* Edition of the epic, we come across another instance of *Śaraṇāgati*, in the episode depicting Lord Śiva destroying Dakṣa's sacrifice and he advised the frightened Dakṣa to seek refuge in Lord Śaṅkara. Dakṣa repeatedly bowed to Śiva and recited with devotion the *stotra* of Śiva and ardently appealed to him to rescue him like a loving father.¹⁵ The merciful Śiva obliged and put an end to his calamity.

A good example of *Śaraṇāgata Bhakta* is seen in the incident where in Bhīṣma, lying on the bed of arrows entered the state of deep meditation and prayed Lord Kṛṣṇa at length sought His blessings and mercy to secure the highest 'Gati' (*Mukti*). Bhīṣma was a repository of both valor and learning, had maintained his two most difficult pledges throughout his life and was an excellent devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This prayer is indeed covers all aspects of the Lord and Kṛṣṇa is glorified as Lord of the Universe, all-in-all of the creation, embodiment of highest knowledge the inner self of *Prāṇa*, *Kāla*, *Viśva* and is the final eternal abode for the devotees. Bhīṣma offers obeisance again and again.

Yasmin sarvam yataḥ sarvam yaḥ sarvam sarvtaśca yaḥ.

*Yaśca sarvamayo nityam tasmai sarvātmāne namaḥ.*¹⁶

He is all this; all are in Him; He exists on all sides; all are in Him; all are dwelling in Him; I bow down to that external *Sarvātmā*. In this great prayer, Bhīṣma has repeatedly sought the shelter of the Lord. I cite here two such statements:

1. *Yuktivā sarvātmanātmānam tam prapadye Prajāpatim.*¹⁷

2. *Atibuddhindriyātmānam tam prapadye Prajāpatim.*¹⁸

The term *prapadye* clearly suggests the attitude of *Śaraṇāgata*. In the same chapter, at the end, the devotee here seeks *Mokṣa* (*Tvām prapannāya bhaktāya gatimiṣṭām jigiṣave*).¹⁹

Earlier it is said that Yudhiṣṭhira visits Kṛṣṇa and finds Him completely absorbed in thought. Then Kṛṣṇa explains that his mind has gone to Bhīṣma. The Lord blesses him and shows him his real divine form. He tells him that there are only 56 days remaining for him to go to the higher world. The world wherefrom there is no return; You kindly instruct Yudhiṣṭhira in this remaining period. From all these instances, we can know how the devotees remember their God, serve at his feet and seek mercy and protection from Him. A *sādhaka* is not capable of *Saraṇāgati* unless he follows moral principles, his firm faith and possesses virtues like truthfulness, compassion, self-restraint and detachment. A *saraṇāgata* practices a sort of *Parā bhakti* depends entirely on Lord Kṛṣṇa, showers his love on Him, considers him as his Master, desires to serve him every moment, takes refuge under His feet and gets fully absorbed in his God.

Notes and References

- 1 *Gitā*.9-2.
- 2 *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* - 7.5.23.
- 3 *Śāṇḍilya-sūtra*.2
- 4 *Bhāgavata*: 3.29.12.
- 5 *Gitā*.9.29.
- 6 *Ibid*.9.34.
- 7 *Ibid*.18.62.
- 8 *Ibid*.9.65.
- 9 *Ibid*.18.66.
- 10 *Mahābhārata*.12.328.30.
- 11 *Ibid*.12.332.3.
- 12 *Ibid*.12.336.49.
- 13 *Ibid*, *Vanaparvan*, Chs. 262 and 263.
- 14 *Ibid*, *Sabhāparvan* Ch.68 (*Chitraśālā* edn.)
- 15 *Ibid*. Ch.283-284.
- 16 *Ibid*.12.47.54.
- 17 *Ibid*.12.47.11.
- 18 *Ibid*.12.47.21.
- 19 *Ibid*.12.47.62

Śaraṇāgati in Pāñcarātra Āgama

SADHU SHRUTIPRAKASHADAS

Nigama-Āgama Tradition:

The term *nigama* refers to four Vedas and by extension to the scriptures based on the *Vedas*. These literature include *Brāhmaṇa*-texts such as *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* etc., *Grhya-sūtras* and *Śrauta-sūtras*: the explicator of the duties of house holders (*grhasthas*), *Āraṇyaka* texts: the elaborator of the thoughts of matured old age reclusive-state (*vānaprastha-avasthā*) and the *Upaniṣads*. Besides these the *Vedāṅgas* such as *Jyotiṣa*, *Vyākaraṇa* etc., and the *Upavedas* like *Dhanurveda* etc. the *Darśanas*, *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsa* etc. All these texts have nourished the great *Bharatiya* heritage.

Alongside the *Nigama* tradition, the *Āgama* tradition also flourished and developed side by side, with almost equal antiquity. *Āgama* tradition also has equally preserved and promoted the *Bhāratiya* values. The term '*Āgama*' is mainly used as one of the important source materials for many *sampradāyas* (religious philosophies) of India.

Most of these *sampradāyas*, their structures, the concepts of *bhakti* (devotionalism) and *prapatti* (surrender), celebrations of festivals, ritualism, initiation-procedure (*dikṣāvidhi*), daily worship, icon-consecration (*mūrti-pratiṣṭhā*), *mantra* recitation etc. are the main themes besides philosophies and details concerning temple construction and icon-sculpture. They are preserved in *agama* texts. Among the branches of *āgamas*, *Vaiṣṇava-āgamas*, *Śaiva-āgamas*, *Śākta-āgamas*, *Jaina-āgamas* and *Bauddha āgamas* are famous. Here too, the *Vaiṣṇava āgamas* being *sāttvika*, are considered to be most inspiring and laudable from the point of *Bhāgavata-dharma*.

The *Vaiṣṇava āgamas* are further subdivided into two categories namely, *Vaikhānasa-āgamas* and *Pāñcarātra-āgamas*. In Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams and many other *Śrīvaiṣṇava* temples, the *pūjā*-rituals are conducted on the guidelines set out by

Vaikhānasa āgamas; where as in Srirangam and other southern centers, the *pūja* rituals unto Lord Vāsudeva are done on the guidelines set out by *Pāñcarātra āgamas*.

Pāñcarātra – literature

As such *Pañcarātra* does not stand for a single text but it stands for as many as 59 various *Samhitā* treatises. Of these *samhitās*, *Sātvata-samhitā*, *Pauṣkara-samhitā*, *Jayākhyā-samhitā* are the oldest. In Śrīvaiṣṇavism, the antiquity of *samhitās* date back to the time much prior to the age of *Ālvārs*. Almost from 1st century AD to 15th century AD the *samhitās* were written and added in the list of this literature.¹ The roots and traits of various *Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas*, such as *Śrīvaiṣṇava-sampradāya* of Śrīmad Rāmānujācārya, *Rudra-sampradāya* of Śrīmad Vallabhācārya, *Sanaka-sampradāya* of Śrīmad Nimbārkaācārya, etc. are found in these *samhitās*. In some of the lately composed *samhitās*, we find the descriptions of established principles and practices of these *sampradāyas*. The varied accounts of various *sādhana*-forms are found in these *samhitās* in their temporal order.

Śaraṇāgati In Pāñcarātra Āgamas

As such these *samhitās* abound with a vast range of details relating to ritualistic worship and devotionism, never the less the main theme of this *āgamic* literature is the rise (progress or spiritual voyage) of the *jīvātman* (self) towards *Paramātman* (Supreme self). Naturally, therefore, 'śaraṇāgati' becomes the central topic of discussion. In the oldest *samhitās* this is in the germinal form, but with the passage of time it became an important topic of detailed treatment. With the rise of Śrīmad Rāmānujācārya's Śrīvaiṣṇavism, 'prapatti'/'Śaraṇāgati' became a significant theme of discussion in post-Rāmānuja-period *samhitās*.

Genesis of Śaraṇāgati

The early reference to *Śaraṇāgati* we find in the usage of the word *ālambana* in *Sātvata-samhitā*, being the oldest of all. Here, while describing the glory of *Śrīyah-pati paramātman* as the *vibhava*, it refers in this context to Śrī (Lakṣmī) and Lord Nārāyaṇa and says

Yamālambya sukenemam dustaram hi guṇodadhim |
Nistarantyaścireṇaiva vyaktam dhyāna parāyaṇaḥ² ||

By seeking refuge at the feet of Lakṣmī (Śrī), the seekers engaged in the meditation (*dhyāna-parāyaṇa*) can certainly cross over the painful ocean of *saṁsāra* easily which otherwise is extremely difficult to cross over.

The *Pauṣkara-saṁhitā* (text, next in the order) uses the term 'prapanna' (i.e. *Śaraṇāgata*) clearly. While narrating the fruit of the devotion unto *Mantrarāja*, the *Saṁhitā* writes:

*Atibhakti prabhāvācca vāñchitam samprayacchati /
Yasmāt sadbhaktipūtānām prapannānām kramam vinā //
Prasādameti mantrēśastvacirād bhāvītātmanām*³

The Lord: *Mantrarāja* pleased extremely by the impact of devotion fulfils the desires of His devotees though they have not followed the orderly steps of spiritual discipline, because they are the *Śaraṇāgata* the pious souls hallowed by the purity of devotion.

Thus in the ancient treatises of *Pāñcarātra-saṁhitās*, the two words namely *ālambana* and *prapanna* are a proof enough to justify the doctrine of *Śaraṇāgati* though of course we do not find any stipulation of the definition of *Śaraṇāgati* therein.

Ahribudhnya-saṁhitā, which comes in order after the three earlier *saṁhitās* mentioned above, makes clear reference both of the terms *Nyāsa* and *Śaraṇāgati*. It specifically sings the glory of *Sudarśana* (the holy Discus) and *Śaraṇāgati* in it. Here, while narrating the value and importance of *Śaraṇāgati* and its many-fold advantages, it says, *Nyāsa* as a means is like *Mahopaniṣad*. It is extremely secret. It is the bestower of the most beneficent fruit. It destroys all sins. Therefore, it need not be glorified before an *abhakta* i.e. (a man not devoted to God). Since you are my devotee, I speak to you of the *nyāsa* sheerly for your good. As such God is not approachable and accessible through *Sāṅkhya* (discriminating knowledge), nor by *Yoga*, nor by *Bhakti* nor through any other means. However, the same Lord *Puruṣottama* is attainable through *nyāsa*. The *nyāsa* has six-fold requirement.

- (i) *Ānukūlyasya saṅklpaḥ* i.e. willing to perform all acts which would please God.
- (ii) *Prātikūlyasya-varjanam* i.e. refraining from performing acts which would earn God's displeasure.
- (iii) *Kārpaṇya* i.e. feeling of utter humility and helplessness.
- (iv) *Mahā-viśvāsa* i.e. unshakable faith in God as the only protector.

- (v) *Gopīṭva-varaṇam* i.e. requesting protection in all meekness.
 (vi) *Ātma-nikṣepa* – act of surrendering one's self totally to the care of God.⁴

In this manner, after discussing six-fold *Śaraṇāgati*, it adds that *Śaraṇāgati* is a means (*upāya*), and prays: I am the home of all sins-ills-evils. It is extremely difficult, nay impossible to get rid of them. So, O Lord, solely and exclusively You be my Liberator (*upāya*).⁵ Perhaps in the history and antiquity of *Śaraṇāgati*-doctrine, its nature and characteristics, – this is the first attempt of its kind. This is the conclusion, one is prompted to draw from the study of the *Pāñcarātra saṁhitā*s.

Further explication of Six-fold *Śaraṇāgati*:

One comes across the detailed account of six-fold *Śaraṇāgati* especially in *Lakṣmītantra* and *Śrīpraśna-saṁhitā*. Bringing out the glory of *Śaraṇāgati* and the characteristics of a *Śaraṇāgata*, *Lakṣmītantra* says: A devotee bereft of all other desires, disinterested in undertaking all other activities, devoid of the sense of I-Me-Mine, crosses over this *saṁsāra* successfully through refuge sought in Me. Whether he be a man of great scholarship in *Sāṅkhya* and *Yoga*, or righteous dutiful man or a man of all purity, but he is hardly worth a billionth portion (*kalā*) of a *Śaraṇāgata*-devotee.⁶ More or less in a similar language the same glory of a *śaraṇāgata* is sung in *Śrīpraśna-saṁhitā*⁷ also and thence the descriptive analysis of six-fold *Śaraṇāgati* is offered as follows:

- 1) One must live life in conformity (*anukūla*) with God, in all possible ways. In all living beings 'I' (Lord Nārāyaṇa and Śrī conjointly) am residing as an *Antaryāmi Ātman*.
- 2) In the same way, the avoidance of acts that are detrimental/ hurting to other living beings (*bhūtāni*).
- 3) *Kārpaṇya* or self-effacement means giving up of pride and arrogance. Despite being born in a high-caste-respectable family with culture and scholarship, when there is lack of relevant paraphernalia, strength, wealth etc. and when there is failure of favorable reward from land, time, virtues etc. and when *Śaraṇāgata* (surrendered) *mumukṣu* realizes the failure of all his efforts, and when obstacles keep on increasing and when he becomes aware of the futility of his

high birth, wealth, scholarship, efforts etc. and thus he is led to abandon all pride and vanity of that. This is called *kārpanya*: the sense of utter helplessness and consequent humility. *Kārpanya* yields the inner strength and elicits Lord's grace.

- 4) God is the supreme Lord. He is the Ruler and controller of the whole universe. From the beginning-less time my dear Lord (*Iṣṭadeva*) alone is the creator sustainer-destroyer of the universe and protector of the *jīvas* from all fears. And certainly He will protect me from all dangers and fears. Such unshakable firm faith in God is called *mahā-viśvāsa*.
- 5) The Lord God is omniscient. He is the ocean of mercy (*karuṇā*). Now, if in spite of knowing Him as such, the afflicted soul does not pray and plead before Him for protection, He won't come to rescue. Therefore, one ought to offer humble prayer that "Oh Lord! please kindly protect me". This is called *Goptrīva-varaṇam*.
- 6) When a well-protected surrendered-one gives up ego, sense of agency and desires for fruits of action and offers everything (all actions) as offerings to His Lord, this attitude then is called *ātmanikṣepa*.⁸

Other Definitions of Śaraṇāgati

Śeṣa-saṁhitā speaks of two forms of *Śaraṇāgati*. It says: Surrender (*prapatti*) is of two kinds, namely *Ārta* and *Drpta*. Here, *ārta* is a *sakāma* aspirant. He is the one who violates My (i.e. God's) commands (wishes). *Ārta* is devoid of dutifulness (*karma*) and *jñāna* (right knowledge). He is simply attached to objects of enjoyments. On the other hand, *drpta* aspirant remains strictly duty-abiding. He possesses the virtues of purity-piousness, good conduct etc. He is a man of right knowledge (*jñāni*). *Drpta* achieves communion (*Sāyujya*) with Me (i.e. God) as against this, *ārtā* is *drohī* (calumniator, malinger) of Me.⁹

As such, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is replete with various descriptive-passages relating to *Śaraṇāgati*. In the first chapter (*adhyāya*), three characteristics of *Śaraṇāgati* are stated in a two-fold manner. The first form is relating to the explication of *Śaraṇāgati* in action (*kāyika*), speech (*vācika*) and thought (*mānasika*).

- (i) Offering prostrations to the Lord, adorning one's body with holy symbols of conch (*Śaṅkha*) discus (*cakra*) etc., putting upright mark of *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* on forehead, remaining obedient and duty-bound to *ācārya* etc. are the forms of *kāyika-śaraṇāgati* i.e. Physical surrender.
- (ii) Those words-statements-passages of the holy books, whose meaning or implication is difficult to decipher are to be learnt under the preceptor-ship of the *Guru/Ācārya* and similarly obtaining the secret formulae (*guhya parama mantra*) and their correct pronunciations, is called *vācika-śaraṇāgati* i.e. surrender of speech.
- (iii) As per requirements of the *nyāsa-yoga* (refugee-discipline), following rituals, putting *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* etc. and with this propitiating and honorably worshipping and serving the *Guru (ācārya)* who gave initiation to the aspirant is called *mānasī-śaraṇāgati* i.e. mental surrender / surrender in thought.¹⁰

In *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, in the same chapter referred above, we also come across another form of three divisions of *Śaraṇāgati* in terms of *sāttvikī*, *rājasi* and *tāmasī*.

Characteristics of Śaraṇāgata and Types.

Various typical characteristics of *Śaraṇāgata* (the surrendered ones) are discussed in detail in many *saṁhitās*. The first chapter of *Parāśara-saṁhitā* states in detail the codes of conduct and disciplines to be followed by the *Śaraṇāgata*. Here the *nitya* and *naimittika karmas* (daily-universal duties and occasional duties), *pañcakāla* (five times) *pūja* rituals, the procedure of inscribing heated emblems on the body, etc., are briefly explained.¹¹ *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* has declared that in *Śaraṇāgati* the distinctions of the *jāti* (castes) such as *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* etc., the sex distinctions of male-female, the age distinctions of child-youth etc. have no place. All are eligible as *śaraṇāgata* (refuge-seeker). Here, in the third chapter, the codes of conduct (*sadācāra*) for the *prapanna* is elaborated. The *Pāñcarātra-rakṣā*: the text of Vedānta Deśika delineates the daily duties (*dainika-ācāra*) of the *prapanna*.

Generally, the *prapanna bhaktas* are known as *ananya-śaraṇāgata* i.e. surrendered ones with undivided (exclusive) fidelity to one's Lord alone. However, there are two kinds here, namely the

Ekāntins and *Parama Ekāntins*. In this connection, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* clarifies, “Those devotees (aspirants) who surrender by giving up alliance to all other gods/deities, remain faithfully loyal to Lord Viṣṇu’s *pādasevā* (alone) and have craving for the knowledge of Him alone – are called *Ekāntin bhaktas*. On the other hand, the aspirants who surrender theirs’ everything, including their very self, and do not have anything in view except the servant-hood (*kainkarya*) of God and sense of utter dependence on Him alone (in all conditions) is called *Parama Ekāntin bhakta*”.¹²

Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa – the 18th century philosopher distinguishes between *Ekāntika* and *Parama Ekāntika* thus: *Ekāntikas* are like the fire of the lightning which though dwelling in the clouds pregnant with water (of nature of *māyā*) do not get extinguished by it on account of their overwhelming influence on *māyā* (also). As against this, the *Parama Ekāntika* is like the submarine fire (*Vaiśvānara*) which although residing at the bottom of the sea doesn’t get extinguished by water around, and on the contrary, it assimilates and sublimates the saline water of the sea and returns it back in the form of rain-showers by which all grains and medical plants derive nourishment. In the like manner, the *Parama Ekāntika* saint has the capacity to bring about total conversion in the seekers who in the beginning are like the saline water of the sea. They are turned into pious devotees by him. The *Ekāntika-bhaktas* (lightning-fire-like) are like the higher order aspirants who still are in process of final accomplishment; while the *Parama-ekāntika* saint (submarine-fire-like) is eternally accomplished devotee of the Lord.¹³

As such the main theme of *Pāñcarātra* and the *Vacanāmṛtam* of Svāminārāyaṇa run a good deal parallel. The Svāminārāyaṇa *Sampradāya* views its present Guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj as the *Parama Ekāntika* Saint who is well-known in India and the world over.

Conclusion

Right from the *Pāñcarātra* texts of the greatest antiquity to the texts available upto fifteenth century, and also the *Samhitā*-texts composed in the post-Vedānta Deśika period have been taken into account here while explicating the nature and characteristics of *Saraṇāgati* together with types and duties of *Śaraṇāgata* in this brief paper. Of course, whole of Vedānta Deśikā’s work *Nikṣeparakṣā* is

exclusively written on this theme alone on the basis of so many references quoted from old *Samhitā* texts.

I close the discussion here with a prayer at the feet of the Lord Almighty that accept our *Śaraṇāgati* on the model of *Pāñcarātra* and bestow upon us the benefits of the same out of your overwhelming mercy.

Notes and References

- 1 See for further details: - *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātra Āgama* by Dr. Daniel Smith, Oriental Institute, Baroda, India. (1975) and also, *Catalogue of Pancarātra Samhitā* by Sadhu Paramapurushdas, AARSH, Akshardham, Gandhinagar, India (2003).
- 2 *Saṁvatsa Samhitā* – 12.84, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi, India (1982).
- 3 *Pauṣkara Samhitā* – 38.58, Yatiraja Sampathkumara Ramanuja Muni, Melkote, India (1934).
- 4 *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* – 37.23-29 (abridged here), The Adyar Library Research Center, Madras, India (1986)
- 5 *Ibid.* 37.30-31:
Ahamasmyaparādhānāmālayo'kiñcano'gatiḥ |
Tvamevopāyabhūto me bhaveti prārthanāmatih ||
śaraṇāgatirityuktā sā deve'smīn prayujyauām |
- 6 *Lakṣmīantram* – 17.62-63. The Adyar Library & Research Center, Madras, India (1969).
- 7 *Śrīpraśna Samhitā* – 53.21-22, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, India (1969).
- 8 *Op. Cit. Lakṣmī Tantra* 17.66-75, *Śrīpraśna Samhitā* – 53.23-31.
- 9 *Śeṣa Samhitā* – 15 p.85, G.R. Josiyer, Mysore, India (1981)
- 10 *Bhāradvāja Samhitā* – 1/21-24, Khemraj Shrikrishnadas Prakashan, Mumbai, India (1996)
- 11 *Parāśara Samhitā* – 1.7-15. Sri Pancharatra Agama Samrakshana Trust, Srirangam (2000).
- 12 *Bhāradvāja Samhitā* – 6.60-61
- 13 *Vacanāmṛtam* – 203, Swaminarayana Aksharapith, Ahmedabad. (1996).

Śaraṇāgati and Bhāgavatam

SADHU SHRIHARIDAS

The main theme of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* is to inculcate the glory and greatness of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the necessity of cultivating devotion to him. The rest of the subject-matter, including the accounts of other Incarnations is made subordinate to it. It is an accepted principle of interpretation that the subject-matter of a book has to be reflected in its introduction and conclusion. Judged on the basis of this standard, the whole of first *skandha* of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* deals with Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the bestowal of His grace on the Pandavas, and the three concluding *skandhas* deal directly with Him and His teachings and the times that follow his demise.

The question was posed by the Rṣis of Naimiśāranya and as an answer to it, Sūta gave the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, the text most exclusively related to Kṛṣṇa. They had asked him, "Oh! Sūta, tell us what was the purpose for which the *Bhāgavān* was born in Devakī as the son of Vasudeva? Tell us who are endowed with spiritual zeal, about His noble and sportive activities, of which sages have sung. Tell us about the incidents of the incarnations of Śrī Hari, where in He manifested His sportive nature through His own mysterious power. We are never satisfied with hearing the glorious sports and activities of the Lord, the description of which appear so sweet to true connoisseurs in every age. What superhuman acts did the Bhagvān perform along with Rāma, having adopted the mask of human body?"¹ The whole of the *Bhāgavata* is an answer to these questions.

Further, the very reason, which prompted Vyāsa to compose *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, was the urge to produce a devotional work exclusively devoted to the glorification of Lord Vāsudeva. It is stated in the *Bhāgavata* that when Vyāsa was sitting in a mood of depression and dissatisfaction, and worried to know the cause of it, the great *Rṣi* Nārada appeared before Vyāsa and informed him that the cause of his depression was the fact that in all his works he had dealt only

with human values, at the best with slight touches of devotional element. He further said, "You have not, Oh sage, described the transcendent glory of Vāsudeva in an exhaustive manner as you have done with regard to *Dharma* (morality) and *Artha* (power)."² And the consequence of this advice was the production of the *Bhāgavata*, which describes itself as follows:

In other works, the supreme Lord Hari, who destroys the impact of the iron age of Kali, has not been praised in all their aspects, but in this narrative the Bhagavān has been glorified in every word of it.³ Further, when Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the world along with Him disappeared *Dharma* and *Jñāna*; and there rose this blazing sun of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as a guide to men caught in the darkness of Kali.⁴ If a person studies or hears this text, the Bhagavān will very soon become manifest in his heart. Having entered the heart through the ear, Kṛṣṇa purifies the mind as the spring season purifies all the rivers. One whose mind has thus been purified finds eternal rest at the feet of Kṛṣṇa, as a traveler does on reaching home after a perilous trying journey full of troubles.⁵

Ten subjects discussed in it distinguish this *Bhāgavata*. They are *Sarga*, *Visarga*, *Sthāna*, *Poṣaṇa*, *Uti*, *Manvantara*, *Īśānukathā*, *Nirodha*, *Mukti* and *Āśraya*. It is held that the first nine topics are described in order to emphasize the importance of *Āśraya*, the last one. *Āśraya* means a place of refuge, a support or a master. *Āśraya* or dependence on *Bhagavān* is the key to God-realization. Complete dependence on God results in ones giving up all ego, self-dependence and then surrendering to the will of God. The attempt of all philosophical and religious teachings in *Bhāgavata* is to impress on the devotees the need to give up all notions of 'I' and 'Mine'. And self-surrender is (or *Śaraṇāgati*) is the surest and easiest means to get rid of egoism. Once the devotee surrenders himself at the feet of God, his work is over. The Lord takes care of him thereafter. What is necessary here is, only complete faith in Bhagavān.

Once firm is faith aroused, there is nothing that can arrest the progress of the devotee. It comes of its own accord through the grace of God. A wise gardener sows seeds and he has faith in their sprout and yield. He does not dig up everyday to see whether the seeds are germinating and growing. If he does that, he will be only retarding its growth. Similarly if a devotee believes in the Deity and surrenders himself completely to Him, he will be blessed here long.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata illustrates the doctrine of Śaraṇāgati or self-surrender through episodes and prayers of bhaktas like Ambarīṣa, Prahlāda, Uddhava, Mahābali, Ajāmila, Parikṣit and so on.

Ambarīṣa, though a great monarch, was totally devoted to Lord Vāsudeva and had no other thought except Lord Hari in his mind. Pleased with his devotion and love Śrī Hari gifted him His own discus (Sudarśana), the terror of His adversaries and the protector of His servants. This devoted soul who had surrendered himself to Vāsudeva was once caught between the horns of dilemma. Once Ambarīṣa had observed the *ekādaśī* fast and was about to break it on the next day. At that very moment there appeared before him an unexpected guest in the person of sage Durvāsa. Ambarīṣa greeted him honorably and offered him to have meal at his royal house. After accepting the invitation Durvāsa went to finish his routine bath at the riverbank. Only half a *muhūrta* of *dvādaśī* day and fast had to be broken before the *muhūrta* expired. Having consulted other priests in this matter as to what is the best course of action Ambarīṣa took a little water (*tīrtha*) as it is said that to take little holy water is as good as taking food and at the same time it is no eating nor breaking fast. However, on knowing this act of the king, Durvāsa was furious and produced an evil spirit (*Kṛtyā*) in order to get rid of Ambarīṣa. But he did not move an inch. He had implicitly firm Trust in Lord Vāsudeva and at once Sudarśana burnt the evil spirit and rushed at Durvāsa. Durvāsa betook himself to the quarters, the sky, the terrestrial spheres as well as their guardians and heaven too. He approached Brahmā, Śiva and finally to Viṣṇu, but all in vain. At last Viṣṇu asked the sage to go back to King Ambarīṣa and beg forgiveness of him. Tired of futile pursuits, Durvāsa went back to Ambarīṣa for protection. The king Ambarīṣa pleaded Lord Viṣṇu, and the discus was then called back. Having surrendered themselves unto Him, these bhaktas become such favorites of Lord Viṣṇu that He in turn becomes so much attached to them that their welfare becomes His paramount interest. Viṣṇu thus says, "Pious devotees are my heart, while I am the very heart of such devotees. They do not cognize anything else dearer than Me nor do I know in the least anyone else dearer than them." Addressing thus Viṣṇu tells Durvāsa, "Therefore, Oh Brahman, approach king Ambarīṣa and beg forgiveness of that highly pious soul." The points to be noted here is that Vāsudeva did not want to do anything that a devotee like

Ambarīṣa did not desire. His love and attachment to such selfless bhaktas makes him powerless in a certain sense. The question whether to save the sage or not was to be decided by his devotee Ambarīṣa alone and so Viṣṇu sends the sage back to thinking. Humility is the first quality of any bhakta and in case of those who have surrendered themselves to Lord Vāsudev there is not even a trace of ego left in them that they are humility personified.

Prahlāda, the son of Hiranyakaśipu, was another such devotee of Śrī Hari. His father was a born enemy of Lord Hari and persecuted him for uttering the divine name of Hari. But Prahlāda putting his whole faith in the Lord had remained firm in his devotion to Lord Vāsudeva. The chief purpose of descent of Narasimhāvatāra was to save His devotee Prahlāda from further harm and harassment at the hands of Hiranyakaśipu.

Uddhava another devout bhakta, started worshipping Lord at an early age of five and it is said that he engaged in such worship, he felt no inclination even to take his food in spite of his mother's insistence.

King Parikṣit is described as a great Śaraṇāgata - devotee of the Lord. Having given his mind and heart to the Lord he did not feel embarrassed even when faced with terrible fear of meeting his death at the hands of the serpent Takṣaka. He shook off all attachment and awaited his death without perturbation. In fact the devout Parikṣit hailed the fire-like poison of Takṣaka as a blessing, for he thought the idea of death will speedily arouse dispassion in him.

The incident of wresting of the three worlds from King Bali by Mahāviṣṇu in His incarnation as the Vāmana, is also wonderful incident of Śaraṇāgati in Bhāgavata. King Mahābali was repeatedly warned by his advisor-priest Śukrācārya not to accede to any request or demand of Vāmana, but king Mahābali bent on to keep his pledge of giving charity (dāna) was firm in his decision and hence did not pay heed to advice of his guru. He surrendered all his kingdom to Lord Vāmana. Not only that he surrendered his own self and was put in captivity and yet did not lose his devotional presence of mind. The Lord was so pleased by his Śaraṇāgati that He rewarded Bali with the post of Indra in the age of Manu Sāvartī.

After having referred to the episodes of Śaraṇāgati from Śrīmad Bhāgavata, let us now turn to cull and assess the passages that bring out the role and significance and glory of Śaraṇāgati, because as hinted in the beginning of this paper, 'Āśraya': the Supreme Lord as the refuge of all and refuge-seeking at His feet is the central theme and the main undercurrent of Śrīmad Bhāgavata.

In the ocean of worldly existence (*samsāra*), which is the arena of pain and suffering, misdirected action and consequent cycles of birth and death, seeking refuge in Lord Śrīhari is the only way out. Therefore, extolling the glory of Śaraṇāgati, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam writes: *Samāśritā ye padapallavālavam mahatpadam puṇyayaśo Murāreḥ/ Bhavāmbudhirvatsapadam param padam padam padam yad vipadām na teṣām//*

The lotus feet of Lord Mukunda Murāri is the whole and sole for the saints of the highest order. Therefore, for those who have sought refuge with Lord Murāri, this whole ocean of worldly existence is as easy to cross over as is a foot step (foot print) of a calf. For them, this world: the home of all miseries ceases to exit and they attain the highest state (*paramapada*): the *Vaikuṇṭha*.⁶ And further it adds:

Śārīrā mānasā divyā vaiyāse ye ca mānuṣāḥ/

Bhautikāśca katham kleśā bādhante harisaṁśrayam//

"Oh Vidura – the son of Vyāsa, No suffering – whether caused by physical, mental or divine or human origin can ever afflict him who has sought refuge in Śrī Hari!"⁷

How should a seeker of refuge (Śaraṇāgata) approach the Lord? With what attitude and mind-set? When the urge to free oneself from the trails and tribulations of worldly existence (*samsāra*) becomes intense, Śaraṇāgata cries out with humble supplication and prayer:

Ciramiha vṛjinārtastāyamāno'nutāpair-

avitr̥ṣaṣadamitro'labdhaśāntiḥ kathamcit/

Śaraṇada samupetastvātpadābjam

parātmannabhayaṁṛtamaśokaṁ pāhi mā'pannamīśa//

Oh God! I am deeply afflicted by the sufferings caused by my *karmas* from beginningless time. Painful blazes of my *karma-phala* (fruits of actions) and mind (*manas*) are never at rest. Their thirst for sensuous pleasures are ever unquenchable, rather they keep on

increasing. Never ever I am at rest or peace for a moment. Therefore, Oh the Supreme Majestic Master (Lord) of the whole universe, the only shelter for me, the only Protector. please protect me, giving shelter to this surrendered-one. ⁸

*Dhyeyam sadā paribhavadghnamabhiṣṭadoham
tīrthāspadam śivavirīñcinuam śaraṇyam/
Bhṛtyārtham pranaṭapālabhavābdhipotam
vande mahāpuruṣa te caraṇāravindam//*

Oh Lord, You are the protector of Your refugees. Your lotus feet are the very objects of meditation for all. They are capable of annihilating all failures and miseries of this world, caused by the ignorance-delusion-attachment. They are the bestower of all beneficent gifts like the wish fulfilling cow (*Kāmadhenu*). They are Holier than the holy pilgrim places. Śiva, Brahmā etc. great gods too bow their heads at your feet. And those who come and seek refuge at Your feet are large-heartedly accepted by You. The lotus feet of Yours are the ridders of all sufferings and afflictions of the seekers and they serve as the only invincible boat to cross over this ocean of worldly turbulations (*samsāra*). Oh Mahāpuruṣa, I therefore, offer my humble salutations at your holy feet. ⁹

Śrīmad Bhāgavata throws light upon the matter of duties and conduct of a śaraṇāgata. Śaraṇāgata is viewed a devotee. He is expected to possess greater degree of spiritual awareness, God-consciousness and duti-abidingness. All his acts and works have to be coupled with love and God-devotedness. We come across so many passages where this point is well-brought out. See for instance the following verses:

*Iṣṭam dattam tapo jātam vṛttam yaccātmanah priyam/
Dārān sutān grhān prāṇān yat parasmai nivedanam//*

A Śaraṇāgata devotee should learn to offer to the Supreme Lord all his sacrificial acts, gifts, austerities, repetitions of sacred names, righteous conduct and all that he likes for himself, (nay) his wife, children, house and his very life. ¹⁰

*Madāśrayāḥ kathā mṛṣṭāḥ śṛṇvanti kathayanti ca/
Tapanti vividhāstāpā naitān madgatacetasah//*

My refugees, totally devoted to me, engage themselves in listening and singing the glory of My sports and pastimes. Their mind is ceaselessly settled in Me. Therefore, they are never tormented by the afflictions of various kinds. ¹¹

*Svapādamūlaṁ bhajataḥ priyasya
tyaktānyabhāvasya hariḥ pareśaḥ/
Vikarma yaccotpatitam kathañciddhunoti
sarvaṁ hr̥di sanniviṣṭaḥ//*

The loving devotee who has forsaken all ties of attachment and by giving up all other attitudes, faiths, feelings, thoughts and works has sought shelter in the holy feet of the Lord, generally does not commit sins, however if at all a sin gets committed (some how), then the Lord seated in his heart takes care to wash away his sins and purify his heart to a state of dross free condition.¹²

*Tribhuvanavibhavaḥetave'pyakuṇṭha smṛtirajitātmasurādibhir-
vimrgyāt/ Na calati bhagavatpadāravindāllavanimiṣārdhamapi yaḥ
sa vaiṣṇavāgryaḥ//*

The Supreme Godhead is invincible, and hence, He is always sought after by all, including gods. So, that devotee of His is foremost among the votaries of Parama Viṣṇu, whose God-consciousness (God-remembrance) is ever pulsating (fresh), and who even in exchange of sovereign rulership of three regions (namely-heaven, earth and intermediate region) does not turn away his devotedness of mind from the lotus feet of the Lord for a fraction of a second.¹³

*Yaḥ param̐ raṁhasaḥ sākṣāṭtriguṇājjiṇṇānjanāt/
Bhagavantam vāsudevam prapannāḥ sa priyo hi me/
Atha bhāgavatā yūyam priyāḥ stha bhagavān yathā/
Na madbhāgavtānām ca preyānanyo'sti karhicit//*

They indeed are very dear to Me for they have surrendered themselves to Bhagavān Vāsudeva who is beyond the veil of *prakṛti* constituted of three *guṇās* (*sattva-rajās-tamas*). All of you are the devotees of the Lord and as such are dearest to the Lord (i.e. Me.) For true *bhāgavatās* (i.e. devotees of Lord Vāsudeva) there is nothing dearer than Me.¹⁴

*Kāyena vācā manasendriyairvā budhyātmanā vā'nusṛtasvabhāvāt/
Karoti yadyat sakalam parasmai nārāyaṇāyeti samarpayettat//*

Whatever he does with his body, tongue, senses, mind, reason/intellect or by force of his inherited nature, he should consecrate all as an offering to the supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa.¹⁵

*Na nākaprṣṭham na ca sārvaḥaṁ na pāraṁśṭhyam na
rasadhipatyam/ Na yogasiddhīrapunarbhāṁ vā vāñchanti yatpāda-
rajaḥ prapannāḥ//*

Having secured the dust of Your Holy feet, the surrendered-ones do not covet the uppermost celestial heaven of Brahmā, nor the rulership of the whole universe, nor the position of Brahmā: the world creator, nor the presidency over subterranean region (called *Rasātala*), nor the supernatural powers of yoga and not even mere freedom from rebirths - say the Nāgapatnis.¹⁶

Na pārameṣṭhyam na mahendradhiṣṇyam na sārvaśaṇṇam na rasādhipatyam/ Na yogasiddhirapunarbhavam vā mayyarpitātmecchati madvinānyat//

One who has totally surrendered to me does not aspire for the position of Brahmā: the possessor of agency of the creation of the world, nor does he aspire the sovereignty over the whole universe, nor does he aspire the rulership over the subterranean world called *Rasātala*, nor does he aspire for the supernatural powers obtainable through yoga and not even the final beatitude i.e. freedom from rebirths for ever. In short, he does not aspire for anything except Me and Me alone.¹⁷

The Lord Almighty is the only supreme refuge, for He alone is the fearless dispeller of fear and protector of the *jīvas*. He is the singular *Śaraṇya paramēśvara*. In power, strength, opulence, bestowal of protection and freedom to the erring souls from their beginningless association with ignorance, vices, *vāsanās* and metempsychosis the almighty Lord Nārāyaṇa is the only *Āśrayasthāna*. He is the only hope and help, for He also is the Lord of mercy and compassion, Father, forgiver of erring souls and concerned lover of mankind. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* further narrates:

sa vai patiḥ syādakutobhayaḥ svayam samantataḥ pātibhayāturaṁ janam/ sa eka evaitatarathā mitho bhayam naiv ātmalābhādadhi manyate param//

Śrī Hari the Lord of all is by very nature free from all fear. He alone is truly fearless and He gives protection in all respects to those who are oppressed by fear of various kinds. He is one and matchless. There is no one higher/stronger than Him to cause him fear. He is eternally self-accomplished, and hence, there is nothing that can give him satisfaction greater than His own blissful self-awareness.¹⁸ And again

*Yatra nirviṣṭamarāṇam kṛtānto nābhimanyate/
Viśvam vidhvamsayan śauryavīryavisphūrjitabhruvā/*

The Kāla: the God of Death, by a single flicker of his brows which are full of majesty, energy and eagerness to destroy the whole *saṁsāra* (world), - fails to exercise his power or authority on creatures who have sought refuge at your feet.¹⁹

Dharmārthakāma iti yo'bhihitastrivarga ikṣā trayi nayadamau vividhā ca vārtā/ Manye tadetadakhilam nigamasya satyam svātmārpaṇam svasuḥrdaḥ paramasya puruṣaḥ//

The Vedas speak of 'tri-varga' i.e. three objects of human pursuit (*puruṣārtha*), namely – *dharma* (righteousness/morality/duty), *artha* (material prosperity), and *kāma* (fulfillment of sensuous desires). In addition, they also guide in science of self-knowledge, ritual-performance, logic, administration of justice and diverse means of earning one's livelihood. All these subject-matters of the Vedas, though true, they have value only if they enable one to offer one's self as a seeker of refuge to the Supreme Self: the Inner controller of all.²⁰

Śaraṇya-Lord protects his surrendered ones from all sides. He makes them fearless and stress-free. He puts them under the umbrella of danger-free security. This is His mercy, care and concern for the *śaraṇāgata*. He does not look at his faults, shortcomings and weaknesses. So kind and compassionate and generous He is, that he does not look at their vices, motives etc. when they approach Him for the surrender. These points are well brought out in the following verse: *Te devasiddhaparigītapavitrāgātha ye sādhaḥ samadṛṣo bhagavatprapaṇnāḥ/ Tān nopasīdata harergaḍayābhiguptān naiṣāṁ vāyam na ca vāyaḥ prabhavāma daṇḍe//*

The sacred stories of those truly devoted souls, who regard all with the same eye and have taken refuge in the Lord are constantly sung even by the gods and *siddhas*. Never approach such devotees protected as they are by the mace of Śrī Hari – Neither we, nor the Time (*Kāla*) has any power/audacity to punish them.²¹

A man in this worldly existence is tormented on all sides by threefold agencies, namely, i) that are brought about by divine agencies in the form of natural calamities, ii) that are inflicted by other living beings and iii) that are arising out of bodily distemper and mental disturbance.

Tāpatrayeṇābhihatasya ghore santayamānasya bhavādhvaniśa/ Puṣyāmi nānyaccharaṇam tavāṅghri-dvandvātapatrādamṛtābhivarṣāt//

Consequently, he undergoes intense suffering in fearful path of metempsychosis. For, such a man, O Lord! I do not find a shelter anywhere except under the umbrella of your feet, which not only provide protection against the scorching sunshine of *samsāra* but also shower the rain of nectar on all sides.²²

*Martyo yadā tyaktasamastakarmā niveditātmā vicikīrṣito me /
Tadā'mṛtatvam pratipadyamāno mayātmabhūyāya na kalpate vai //*

When after renouncing all works (relying on self-efforts), a man surrenders himself to Me, then he becomes an object of My special favour, attains immortality and he thus becomes eligible in fact for enjoying communion with me – he acquires the same divine virtues that are eternally possessed by Me.²³

*Aho baki yam stanakālakūṭam jighamsayā'pāyadapyasādhvi /
Lebhe gatim dhātryucitām tato'nyam kim vā dayālum śaraṇam
vrajema //*

Pūtanā, the sister of demon Baka was an impious woman (a demoness). She, with her breast smeared with a most deadly poison approached to suckle the Lord Kṛṣṇa as a Babe at her breast. Her intention in so doing was to kill him. But, in spite of that, she in return was given the place in the highest divine abode equivalent to a foster-mother. So, as the *śaraṇya* there is no one other than Lord so merciful to seek refuge and resort to, for protection.²⁴

Singing glory of the Supreme Almighty God as the Refuge and the Protector of all, Śrīmad Bhāgavata reiterates:

*Bālasya neha śaraṇam pitarau nṛsimha nārtasya
cāgadamudanvati majjato nauḥ / Taptasya tatpratividhīrya
ihāmjaseṣṭastāvad vibho tanubhṛtām tvadupekṣitānām //*

Oh Lord Nṛsimha! Thou art the true protector. Save you, the parents are no protectors to a child in this world. A medicine is no remedy for an ailing person, and a ship is no protection to a drowning man in the ocean – in as much as they all are seen to fail in numerous cases. Whatever is approved of here as an easy means for an afflicted person is found to be effective for the time being, and not for ever. So, oh Lord! for the embodied souls, apart from You there is no real protector, no true shelter.²⁵

Devarsibhūtāptanṛṇām piṇṇām na kiṅkaro nāyamṛṇi ca rājan /

Sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam gato mukundam parihṛtya kartum //

Giving up all obligations and thoughts of separateness from God, he who whole-heartedly and totally seeks protection from all-

protecting Lord is totally liberated from his debts to the deities, ṛṣis, deceased ancestors, various creatures, relations and other new comers. He is said to have discharged all his obligations and responsibilities, because he has sought refuge in the Supreme God. Such a surrendered-one is neither dependant on any one else, nor is he the servant or subordinate of any one; and he is not even duty-bound to any one else now.²⁶

*Kim durāpādanam teṣām puṁsāmuddāmacetasām /
Yairāśritastīrthapādaścaraṇo vyasanātyayah //*

The self-possessed men who have taken refuge at the feet of the Lord, - the Lord Whose feet are the source of all sacred rivers like Gaṅgā - put an end to fear and sufferings of this worldly life.²⁷

*Tathā na te mādharma tāvakāḥ kvacid bhraśyanti mārgātvayi
badāhasauhrdāḥ / Tvayābhiguptā vicaranti nirbhayā
vināyakānikapamūrdhasu prabho //*

Oh Mādhava, Your devotees have fastened themselves with deepest love and affection on You. They, like the knowledge-conceited spiritualists do not stray away from their path of devotion to You. Protected by You they move about fearlessly and freely stamping their foot on the heads of the commanders of gods presiding over obstacles.²⁸

*Kaḥ paṇḍitastvadaparam śaraṇam samiyād bhaktapriyādṛtagirah
suhṛdaḥ kṛtajñāt / Sarvān dadāti suhrdo bhajato'bhikāmān-
ātmānamapyupacayāpacayau na yasya //*

Oh God! You are the dearest Beloved of Your loving devotees, You are always the truth-speaker, You are friendly well-wisher, You are a home of sheer gratefulness and You have the habit of viewing a little service (good) of a devotee as a great thing. When much is Your uncomparable Greatness, who would ever seek refuge with others apart from You? You always fulfill the desires of Your worshipping devotees; and in fulfillment of this act of Yours there is neither any diminution nor any augmentation (usually based on temporal perception). You are unique and unalterable in gifting the bliss of Your very Self.²⁹

God does not abandon His *śaraṇāgata*. Rather He gets enslaved by the intense love and devotion and absolute dependence of the *śaraṇāgata*. He, therefore, finds difficult, nay impossible to forsake His ties with them. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* makes a mention of this point in following verses:

*Aham bhakataparādhino hyasvatantra iva dvija /
Sādhubhirgrastahrdayo bhaktairbhaktajanapriyaḥ //*

Oh Durvāsa! My devotees have taken completely the total possession of My heart. I am always subject to the control of My devotees and thus I am not at all free or totally self-dependent. I am the only beloved of My loving-devotees.³⁰

*Nāhamātmānāmāsāse madbhaktaiḥ sādhubhirvinā /
Śrīyam cātyantakīm brahman yeṣāṁ gatiraham parā //
Ye dārāgāraputrān prāṇān vittaṁmimam param /
Hūvā mām śaraṇam yātāḥ katham tāmstyaktumutsahe //*

For My devotees, I alone am their Refuge. That is why, leaving My devotees, I do not covet anything, neither Myself, nor My consort Śrī; but My devotees who have renounced every thing namely, wife, house, children, kith and kin, life, property-wealth, the pleasures of this world and heavens, and sought Me alone as their Protector: as their Refuge. So, where can I go leaving / forsaking them?³¹

As the Lord God is the Śaraṇya, so is a true saint: the vehicle of God's divinity, the śaraṇya. According to the *Bhāgavata* 11.11.29-30, the saints endowed with thirty redemptive attributes are fully God-dwelt, and hence, are as good as the incarnations of God. Therefore, they too are equally acceptable as the forms of Śaraṇya – Lord. The verses quoted below bring out this point:

*Yathopaśrayamāṇasya bhagavantam vibhāvasum /
Śūtam bhayam tamo'pyeti sādhuṁ samsevatastathā //*

Just as cold, dismay and darkness are dispelled of a man who betakes himself to the glorious fire of Agni; similarly do the rigidity and destuteness arising on account of exclusive path of action, the fear of rebirths and its roots – ignorance are dispelled in case of man who renders loving service to pious sages.³²

*Annam hi prāṇinām prāṇa ārtānam śaraṇam tvaham /
Dharmo vittaṁ nr̥ṇām pretya santo'rvāg bibhyato'raṇam //*

And just as food is the life-saving thing for the breathing creatures, similarly I am the only Saviour-&-Shelter to all afflicted beings, and just as dharma i.e. rightness-&-merits is the only wealth for a man to rely upon in the world hereafter (heaven), so are the pious saints the only resort-&-refuge for a man scared of being born again and again on this worldly plane.³³

*Sādhavo hṛdayam mahyam sādhuṇām hṛdayam tvaham /
Madanyat te na jānanti nāham tebhyo manāgapi //*

True saints-devotees are My very heart i.e. they are most beloved of Me, while I am the very heart (i.e. The most beloved) of such saints-devotees. They do not perceive (or cognize) anything else (as dearer) than Me, nor do I know in the least any one else dearer than them.³⁴

*Yatpādasamśrayā sūta munayah praśamāyanāḥ /
Sadyaḥ punantyupasprṣṭāḥ swardhanyāpo'nusevayā //*

Sūta! Sages who have taken shelter in His feet, and therefore, ever abide in perfect tranquility (peace of mind) forthwith purify those who come in contact with them; whereas waters of the celestial Gaṅgā cleanse the heart only by long-continuous use (because they are no longer in direct touch with those feet, although they still retain their purifying virtue because of the touch they once had with them).³⁵

After having permitted the seekers of Spiritual path to seek refuge at the feet of a saint endowed with all saintly qualities, auspicious virtues and through and through God-indweltness; *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*: also says a word of caution. In order that seeker may not get misled, it clearly says as to who should not be approached for seeking refuge.

*Avismitam tam paripūrṇakāmam svenaiva lābhena samam praśāntam /
Vinopasarpatyaparam hi bālīśaḥ śvalāṅgulenātītīrti sindhum //*

Oh Lord! thou are egoless, perfectly tranquil, eternally self-accomplished. For You, there is nothing unknown, nor any thing new to surprise You. You are eternally dwelling in Your Own Self. Now forgetting these glory of Yours, if any one seeks refuge with any being lower in order than You, then he is a feeble-minded fool attempting to cross the vast ocean with the help of a dog's tail.³⁶

In conclusion, I humbly hold the view that *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* is treasure house, accommodating in its bosom *Adhyātma-śāstra* (metaphysics) *Śeśvaravāda* (Personolistic Theism), *Dharma-śāstra* (Ethics / Moral Philosophy), *Sādhana-mārga* (Pathway to God), *Ānubhāvavāda* (Mysticism), *Bhakti-śāstra* (Devotionalism) and above all the *Śaraṇāgati-śāstra*: the detailed treatise extolling the glory and importance of seeking refuge in God. It would be therefore, appropriate to sum up the message of this paper through the following verse of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* asking one and all to seek resort at the feet of the Bramanized-Guru.

*Tasmād gururṁ prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam/
Śābde-pare ca niṣṇātam barahmanyupaśamāśrayam//*

Therefore, an aspirant desirous of right knowledge of the Highest Good (beneficence/*kalyāṇa*) should seek refuge in the Guru who is well-versed in the Vedas (Vedic testimony/*śabda*), is a *Brahman*-realized philosopher totally lost in devotion to *Parabrahman* and whose mind is equipoised: free from attachment and hatred.³⁷

Notes and References

¹ *Bhāgavata*.1.1.12, 17-20.

² *Ibid*.1.5.9.

³ *Ibid*.12.2.65.

⁴ *Ibid*.1.1.13.

⁵ *Ibid*.2.8.4-6.

⁶ *Ibid*.10.14.58.

⁷ *Ibid*.3.22.37.

⁸ *Ibid*.10.51.58.

⁹ *Ibid*.11.5.33.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.11.3.28.

¹¹ *Ibid*.3.25.23.

¹² *Ibid*.11.5.42.

¹³ *Ibid*.11.26.33.

¹⁴ *Ibid*.4.24.28, 30.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.11.2.36.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.10.16.37.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.11.14.14.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.5.18.20.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.4.24.56.

²⁰ *Ibid*.7.6.26.

²¹ *Ibid*.6.3.27.

²² *Ibid*.11.19.9.

²³ *Ibid*.11.29.34.

²⁴ *Ibid*.3.2.23.

²⁵ *Ibid*.7.9.19.

²⁶ *Ibid*.11.5.41.

²⁷ *Ibid*.3.23.42.

²⁸ *Ibid*.10.2.33.

²⁹ *Ibid*.10.48.26.

³⁰ *Ibid*.9.4.63.

³¹ *Ibid*.9.4.64-65.

³² *Ibid*.11.26.31.

³³ *Ibid*.11.26.33.

³⁴ *Ibid*.9.4.68.

³⁵ *Ibid*.1.1.15.

³⁶ *Ibid*.6.9.22.

³⁷ *Ibid*.11.3.21.

Śaraṇāgati in Divyaprabandham of Ālvārs

SHRI A. BHARADWAJ

One of the most important contributions of Śrivaishṇava ācāryas is the establishment of the concept of Śaraṇāgati through *Ubhayavedānta*; i.e. equal validity of both Sanskrit śruti and the Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs, those who were immersed in God and His qualities. According to *Ācāryahrdayam*, the Vedas as we know are śruti, i.e., what was heard or revealed, and anādi i.e. without beginning and authorship. They are the supreme authority. The Tamil hymns are equally claimed to be anādi in Śrivaishṇava tradition propagating the concept of Śaraṇāgati as the sādhanā throughout life.

It is said that, just as the Lord gave śruti to us through Brahmā, He gave *Nālāyira divyaprabandham* to us through the Ālvārs. Ālvārs have given an equal status to *Kāyika*, *Vācika* along with *Mānasa Śaraṇāgatis*. Nammālvār propounds Śaraṇāgati through thought, words and deeds, to Lord Devarāja of Kāñcīpuram¹.

“This decad of Tamil songs form the pure thousand

On the lord of Tulaivillimangalam by Kurugur Satakopan

Who attained the lord as his father and mother in thought, word and deed

Will secure service to the lord for those who sing it.”

Wherever one may be, he can surrender to God through singing the songs of Ālvārs at any time. There is no question of desiring a fruit (*phala*) for surrendering. Some of the examples are as under –

Kākāśura, the Crow and Kāliya, the serpent surrendered to Rama and Kṛṣṇa respectively for saving their life. Draupadi surrendered to Lord for getting *Vastra* – clothing. Sugreeva surrendered to Lord for getting kingdom. Lakṣmaṇa surrendered to Rama to follow Him to the forest. Hence, there is no bar on the wish for which one undertakes refuge.

Yāmuna does not refer to *Tiruvāymoli* as *dravidaveda*. However, in *Stotraratna* he does pay homage to *Vakulābharāṇa*, Nammālvār whom he calls the first Ācārya.² Many of Yāmuna's ideas are parallel to those of Ālvārs. He includes for instance a direct translation from Kulaśekhara, stanza 26 in *Perumal Tirumoli*. *Guruparamparā* records that as part of his temple reforms, Rāmānuja included the chanting of the hymns of *divyaprabandham*. The author of *Ācāryaḥṛdayam* has recorded that Rāmānuja used to explain the *Brahmasūtras* with the aid of *Tiruvāymoli* where *śaraṇagati* as a means or *sādhana* to attain salvation is discussed in detail.

Tirumaṅkai Ālvār in his *Tiruneduntāṇḍakam*, describes the Lord as one who is in the form of the Sound of Tamil Vedas, which has the power of expression and who is in the form of Sanskrit word, *vatacol* and surrenders to Lord in the form of Nature³. In Naimiṣāranya God is in the form of forest and Tirumaṅkai Ālvār surrenders to Lord in the same form of nature. We do not find any idol of any deity. In the same stanza, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār calls the Lord as the *mantra* of *Vedānta* denoting that all the Upaniṣads describe only Him. From this we can guess that the Ālvār is attaching equal significance to language of *Vedānta* i.e. *vācika śaraṇagati*, who is God Himself the primordial cause of everything. In order to bring this to common man he appeals to the people to seek Lord's feet for deliverance. In *Periyatirumoli* Tirumaṅkai Ālvār first surrenders to Lord at Naimiṣāranyam where he conceives of God in the form of Nature. From there, his subservience to Lord Nṛsimha at Ahobilaṁ,⁴ Lord Venkatesvara at Tiurmala-Tiurpati and to Lord Raṅganātha are seen in that order. He is surrendering himself in these places with an idea of *Para*, *vyūha*, *vibhava*, *arcā* and *antaryāmi* in that order.

Madhurakavi Ālvār thinks only of the feet of Nammālvār and says nothing is required for him.⁵ He surrenders at the feet of Nammālvār and thinks of Lord's qualities for getting peace through the songs of Nammālvār. He takes to the feet and requires nothing else than an everlasting devotion to Nammālvār.

According to Ālvārs, any common man should be in a position to get the grace of God with his devotion and constant practice of Tamil hymns. It may be observed that both *bhakti* and *prapatti* are advocated by Ālvārs as two alternative direct means to attain the supreme goal. *Prapatti* is intended for those who are not eligible for *bhakti-yoga* and who do not possess the capacity to

observe other sādhanās such as *karma* and *jñānai*. When one takes to the singing of mystic songs some inner experiences are felt which are beyond description. An ardent devotee may say that he meditated on God with a mind, overcome by tender emotions or with eyes filled with tears. Slowly, he is approached, in his heart. One may be extremely happy with a vision, the love in my heart revealed itself, but flooded with tears of joy, I lost sight of Him. Any description with words, cannot express the unique feeling. From this we understand that deep *bhakti* leads them to ecstasy, an experience in which they are totally immersed, and forget everything else. Those who singing hymns of Ālvārs, though their physical presence is there, they are transported to the abode of Lord, away from the world of men. They not only are conscious of Union with God but also bring the presence of power of God in their actual experience. They become spiritual masters. They devote their lives to give us the truth and this truth only has brought us our present state of consciousness. The light we have today is the result of contribution of these sages, which has come down through the tide of time. The purpose of *bhakti* is to arrive at the real meaning of oneness. This is what Ālvārs taught us. When the individual comes to that stage, he becomes a sage and realizes that God is the very substance of which his body is formed and God is the only law. Nammālvār accords a greater significance to the unconditional *kṛpā* of God. In a characteristic way he says: *Arul peruvār adiyār tam adiyānerku āliyān aruḷ taruvān*⁶

I have not performed any deeds in the past that would take me to You. Nor have I refrained from evil deeds. I have strayed away from You by indulging in sensual transitory pleasures. Now, taking refuge in You alone should protect me hereafter. Once I get the direction to look at You, I will not be distracted from only looking at You.

According to *Divyaprabandham*, any ardent devotee ought to overcome impediments in the path of emancipation. The first obstacle is the fear that he does not have enough understanding. This is the condition when one begins to practice. Then he tries to achieve control over the body, senses, mind and intellect. Through the control of these, he overcomes obstacles. After performing *Saraṇāgati*, he should take to singing hymns of Ālvārs, which will enable him to hold the thoughts unidirectional. This removes the sense of unrest. The singing of hymns controls the mind, just like the *nāda* used as a

row to capture the elephant of mind, by a *yogi*. During the state of intense dejection, the mystic saint feels that his body, the physical charm, the ornaments and dress and the very life itself are of no value, since these cannot attract God. The Ālvār as a grief stricken *nāyaki* says – ‘I shall discard my docile mind if it fails in pleasing God.’

The supreme way to God-realization, according to the testimony of *Srivaishṇava* faith is *prapatti*. *Bhakti* which is devotion, practised with rich intensity, is an uncertain method in which one may falter and fail but not so in *prapatti*, where absolute identification with God’s will puts the aspirant entirely in His care, freeing him from doubt and fear. The *sādhana* (way) and the *sādhya* (goal) are one. Realization is not postponed to the end, but runs as a golden thread through everyday practice. The God-seekers’ efforts and realizations have their varying stages of fulfillment. *Maṅgalāsāsanam* is an experience of utmost God-love, arising in the mature state of *prapatti*, given to great *prapaṇnas* like Ālvārs, among whom Periyālvār is usually cited as the unique example. The nature of this *mangalāsāsana* experienced by Periyālvār and explaining its appropriateness in the fullness of *prapaṇna*’s life can be seen in detail.

Maṅgalāsāsana is literally benediction, invoking blessings. The blessings invoked here are not by God on man as usual, but by man on God in the reverse direction. The *prapaṇna* devotee, who has established his life and centre in Nārāyaṇa stands fascinated every moment by the ineffable beauty of the Great Master’s Form, and His endless empire all over this world, with all their ministering hosts. All His beauty, all His perfection, all His power, which the devotee constantly enjoys, loves and holds dearer than his existence, momentarily awakens in him a solitude that no harm should touch it and that it should endure for ever and aye in the world of evil forces and malefic intentions. Overflowing love and concern for the beauty he was made his own blinds the *prapaṇna* to the fact that though he is already aware of God’s ability to ward off all evil, he is invoking blessings on God Himself. Love, pure and simple outruns judgement and the person usually blessed becomes the blessing.

A song like the *Tiruppallāntu* blessing Lord’s loveliness and praying for his safety with concern can issue only from the parental heart of a person like Periyālvār. Indeed this Ālvār is known for his *vātsalyabhāva* (parental affection) With Ālvārs other than Periyālvār, attachment to the Lord’s loveliness of form leads on occasion to doing things, offending their basic nature (*svarūpa*) of dependence (*śeṣatva*) on *Bhagavān* (God) and *Bhāgavatas* (His followers). For instance,

the state of dependence on Bhagavān is violated in songs which display anger, against Lord, even in jest, for delay in coming⁷ or turning false the state of dependence on Bhāgavatas is described in songs which blame God's devotees including celestial Garuda, charged with putting difficulties unknowingly in the path of ecstatic devotee.

The lord of celestial is not the one to show himself easily
 He came as a sweet boy, then grew and took the earth, sky and all
 He has beautiful shoulders of exceeding radiance and mischief
 To him I have lost my dignity and shame, so what can I lose, O shakhis⁸.
 And

O frail crane, compassionate, with beautiful wings and a handsome
 master

Would the two of you not pity my plight and take a message from me
 To my Lord who rides the fierce Garuda bird?

Why were he to cage you both, indeed, would that hurt you?⁹
 But with Periyālvār, on the other hand, the fascination exercised by Lord's form serves to enhance the two dependences on Bhagavān and Bhāgavatas and thereby bring to realization the requirement of his basic make-up (*svarūpa*).

Periyālvār's life pilgrimage is conducted by the performance of *mangalāsāsana*. He fears for things, which turn away fear (as witnessed by his anxiety for the welfare of the Lord and his weapons of the *Cakra* and *Śaṅkha*). He enlists in his company even people averse to his pursuits like seekers of the soul only (*kevala*) and men going after riches and relief from suffering (*arthārthin*, *ārta*). He remembers exploits of His Master like the killing of Hiranya or Ravana, when He incurred serious personal risks, and solicitously prays for His safety for many years.

Songs of Periyālvār and teachings of Rāmānujācārya both have a common special distinction. The outpourings of other Ālvārs are aimed at the removal of the isolation of their listeners and of their own selves from God and want him to bring all into companionship with God Himself. But Periyālvār and Rāmanuja speak for removing the loveliness of the Lord Himself and call upon mankind to gather in His service, for the thought of God's companionless state occurs to them, as under:

The stanza has a pensive note of regret that the Lord is alone in both this world and that, as residents of both these worlds are immersed in their own pre-occupations. He carries the weight of his

Cakra and Śaṅkha alone and there is none as Lakṣmaṇa in His incarnation as Rāma to follow in His trail with bow and arrow. The Ālvār longs for the privilege of following His feet, as He treads the earth, but He escapes mortal vision.¹⁰

Tirumaṅkai Ālvār was a king and later got converted as notorious thief who would rob pilgrims and used to feed one thousand ardent devotees daily, to please his moiety Kumudavalli. One day God comes in the form of a traveler and when He was being attacked, He reveals the *aṣṭākṣari-mantra* to this ālvar and thence he starts singing about the glory of Lord. This way first Ālvār who performed *śaraṇāgati* to Lord and then relates the same experience in *Periyatiurmoli*, which contains 1084 stanzas in toto. In the last decad, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār says that one should fear for the continuation in the cycle of births and deaths as though an ant living on a piece of wood which has caught fire on both sides without finding a way out and trembling like a Plantain tree which is on the shores of sea.¹¹ Then taking refuge at Lord's feet with full faith, shall remove his fear and makes him to live here a successful life and then grace with benevolence after his lifespan on the earth's atmosphere.

Kulaśekhara Ālvār would like to have a continuous urge of looking at the feet of Lord and also do any service to Him. Hence he desires for the birth in Tiurmala as a tree, bird, fish or even the Palanquin in the door of sanctum sanctorum.¹² Very living at the *divyadesa* would enable him to serve lord in His own way. Life has a meaning only when the body, word and psyche are all involved in his service. The service should please Him and not please him-self. The state of a *jīva*, who is surrendering should be just like a baby even though ward off by mother, it will go again to mother, till she cajoles him. He gives another example that a crow is sitting on the staff of a ship in a sea. When the ship has sailed for an hour or two, it tries to fly back to the tree on the shore. When it flies, it has to come back and sit on the ship only as there is no other place for it to stand on the sea. Similarly, in the ocean of *samsāra* one has to take refuge in Lord, who is referred to as the *Viṣṇupota*: the ship which helps us to cross over, and ultimately he realizes that He is the other end or destination of the other bank of the ocean.

Tirumalisai Āḷvār in his *Nanmukan Tiruvandādi* reiterates the point that once I have surrendered to Lord, I have lost the body from the cycle of births and deaths. Then I take to the service of Lord through the body in the last birth in order to see the abode of Lord through emancipation at the end of life in this birth.¹³

Āndāl Surrenders at lord's feet to attain Him as a *nāyikā* and through the practice of austerity she appeals to the masses that the goal of surrendering should be to offer services to please Him not for our but for His sake. Because the world is seen as a *lilāvibhūti*, all our activities should be as per the wish of *lilā-nātaka-sutradhāri*. This is in consonance with the idea of *Brahmasutra* – “*Lokavattu lilākaivālyam*”¹⁴. If He gives us a life then we come and sing the Lord. If He is not protecting us in time, He will be considered as a person, responsible for the destruction of 16,000 *gopikas*¹⁵. Here, Āndāl being the daughter of a Brahmin Periyālvār poses herself as a *gopikā-stri* born in the low caste, as *Kṛṣṇānubhava* is available easily for them. Surrendering requires no other qualification than to know the fact that – “I need be protected by Lord”. What is required for protection after performing *Śaraṇāgati* is not to resist protection. One may see that according to ālvārs, *Śaraṇāgati* is defined as – ‘*bhagavatpravṛttivirodhi svapravṛtti nivṛttiḥ prapattiḥ*’ – *Prapatti* is the act of not performing an action, which is against the wish of Lord.

With such a *Śaraṇāgati*, Pillailokacarya states that in six folds the *ātmavarūpa* gets its *sarūpya* with *Lakṣmi*¹⁶ i.e.

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. <i>ananyārhaṣeṣatva</i> | – | being surrendered to Lord Nārāyaṇa |
| 2. <i>ananya śaraṇatva</i> | – | protected by Lord Nārāyaṇa |
| 3. <i>ananya bhogyatva</i> | – | being happy on seeing the happiness of Lord |
| 4. <i>samśleṣa sahiṣṇutva</i> | – | sustenance in union |
| 5. <i>viśleṣa asahiṣṇutva</i> | – | non-sustenance in separation and |
| 6. <i>tadekanirvāhyatva</i> | – | being ordained only by Lord Nārāyaṇa |

Then Lord alone is viewed as the cause for his birth and not the sin or *karma* committed by *Jivātma* in any births.¹⁷

“Oh! Lord you are the person to decide to give life to me and make me to think about you, the deity of celestial beings, and still endowed with the quality of being with me in all my deeds. Please hear my pleadings in the state of being born in this perishable mortal coil and thinking about the temporal things.”

In this *pāsuram*, Nammālvār has performed *śaraṇāgati* with thought, action and body. The five elements of the body are of His. Similarly he performs *Śaraṇāgati* at the feet of Lord Tirunārāyaṇa at Melkote which is called *jñānamantapakṣetra* through thought – *mānasa anuṣṭāna* - at the first stanza of the fourth decad. ¹⁸

“Contemplate, quick, the feet of Tirunārāyaṇa and rise!
For monarch who rules the world as one empire,
Do one day go begging scorned by the entire world
Leg bitten by black bitch, bowl broken and shamed.”

Then Nammālvar makes *vācika śaraṇāgati* at the feet of Lord Taivanāyaka in cirivaramangalanagar and sees that nothing is left with him to offer as his own self is belonging to God only. ¹⁹

“You have given me your feet as my sole refuge and path,
I have nothing to give in return, my soul too is yours.”

Then Nammālvar surrenders at the feet of Lord at Tirukkutantai with all the limbs and is desirous of seeing Him. ²⁰

“What can I do? What would you have me do? Who else can protect me?

O lord reclining in Kudandai, surrounded by stonewalls

I seek redress with none, save you, pray, see that I lead

The remaining days of my life holding on to your feet.”

At *Tiruvenkatamalai*, Nammālvar once again proclaims *saraṇāgati* by deed where in it necessitates the body to be said to belong to him.

“Oh lord who bears the inseparable lotus dame on the chest

Oh master of matchless fame bearing the three worlds

O lord of *veṅgaḍam* desired by celestials and great sages

This refuge-less self has found his refuge sitting at your feet.”

Thus, ālvārs have given a new dimension to the act of surrendering. This will not stop at taking the refuge of lord at once, but should be nurtured on a day-to-day basis till the soul evolves to the status of His own consort, Lakṣmi, i.e. enjoying *sāmīpya*, *sālōkya*. For this, all the ritualistic practices are laid and then he ultimately succeeds in getting emancipation, *sāyujya* at *vaikuṇṭha* after his

leaving the mortal coil. This happens in a peculiar manner with *amānava karasparśa*. This is beautifully delineated by Nammālvār²¹.

“Vedic sirs, praising fortune Washed the devotee’s feet, While moonfaced dames greeted him with lamp and saffron water.

Thus a *sādhaka* who experiences God’s qualities through Ālvār’s *pāsurams*, will be in peace and poise, during his life time in this *līlāvibhūti* and later find a way to *nityavibhūti* which he says with conviction, here and there, *ingum* and *angum*.

To understand *prapatti* properly, one needs to perform *kālakṣepam* under the lotus feet of a *sadācārya* and only by his blessings through the exposition of the *grantham* far supreme viz. *Śrīmad Bhagavadviṣayam* the *magnum opus* of the Nampillai, can one appreciate its glories. It is an unparalleled text containing the ocean of nectar delineating all the things a *mumukṣu* needs to know (*tattva*, *hita* and *puruṣārtha*), presented in such a commanding authority through *pramāṇās* and logic, which once heard, would destroy all the sufferings and turmoil, undergone by a *jīvātmā* and make it have the unshakable faith on the saving grace of the most merciful Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. He will perform *prapatti* and attain *śaraṇāgatiniṣṭhā* with the impeccable *jñānam* obtained from this *grantha*. He will be engaging completely in *ācārya*, *bhāgavata* and *bhagavat kainkaryam* for the pleasure of *Divya Dampati*. There will be no worries hereafter.

Notes and References

¹ Tiruvāymoli 6-5-11

² *mātāpūāyuvata yastanayāvibhūti-
ssarvam yadeva niyameṇa madanvayānam/
ādyasyanaḥ kulapateḥ vakuḷābhīrāmam
śrīmattadaṅghriyugalam praṇamāmi mūrdhnā//*

Stotraratna 4 of Yāmunamuni

³ *ūnidaiccuvarvait tenpuṭūṇ nāṭi uromnainai onpatuvāśal
ūnudaikkurumbpai piriypupodun cāraṇame cāraṇamenrirundien
Periyāṭṭurumoli 1-6-9*

⁴ Periyāṭṭurumoli 1-9-1

⁵ *nāvi nāhaviṇṇi ṇpa meṭṭiṇṇ* mēvi nēṇṇavan poṇṇaṭi, meymmaiye
tēvu marṇaṇi yēṇkuru kūrnampī pāvi ṇiṇṇicai pāṭi tirivaṇē II Kṇṇiniṇṇirutempu - 2*

⁶ Tiruvāimoli 10-6-1

⁷ Periyāṭṭurumoli 10.8.

⁸ Tiruvāymoli 8.2.9,

- 9 Tiruvāymoḻi - 1.4.1.
 10 Tirumoli 11.8.4. - Irupāderi koḻḻiyul erumbe pol
 11 Periyāṭṭirumoḻi 11-8-1 - Āṭaṅkaraivāḻ marampol aṅḻukinṇen
 12 Perumāḻ Tirumoḻi 4-9 - Emperumān ponmalaimel etenumāvene
 13 Enṇen Aṭimai Iḻanien pīrapṭipai
 āṇren amararkamarāmai
 āṇren kaṭanāṭum maṇṇaṭum kaivīṭu
 melai idamṇāṭu kāṇa ini. Nanmukan Tiruvāṇṭi- 95
 14 Brahmaśūpra (2-1-33)
 15 paṭinārāmāyiravar tevīmār pārūruppa
 matuvāyil koṇṭāppol matusūdan vāyamutām.
 Potuvāka uṇḍatanai puṭṭuṇi undakkāl
 ciṭaiyāro unṇotu celvapperumcanke. - Nācciyār Tirumoḻi - 7-9
 16 Srivacanabhūṣṇam Sū. 240
 17 Poininra ṇālamum pollāvoḻukkumaḻukkuṭampum.
 Inninnra nirmai iniyāmurāmai
 uyiraḻippāṇ enninra yoniyumāy pīraṇṭāy imaiyortalaiva
 mei ninru keṭṭarūḻy adiyen ceyyum viṇṇappamel. Tiruviruttam - 1
 18 Oruṇāyakamāy odaḻakutaṇāṇṭavar
 karuṇāy kavāṇḍakālar ciṭaiḻiya pāneyar.
 Peruṇāṭukāṇa immaiṭile piccāṭāṅkoḻvar
 ūruṇāraṇan tāḻ kālamper ciṇṭuymino. Tiruvāymoḻi - 4-1-1
 19 ārenakku ninpādame caraṇakāṭaṇṭolināy
 unkkor kaimmaru yāṇonrileṇ enaṭāviyumuṇate. Tiruvāymoḻi - 5-7-10
 20 En nān ceiken yarekalekan ennai en ceikinrāy
 unṇālallāl yāvarāḻum onnum kurai vendē
 Kāṇṇārmāṭiḻcūḻ kuṭanai kkiṭuvuṇāy aṭiyenaruvāṇaḻ
 celnāḻ encennāḻ annāḻuṇatāḻ pūṭṭe celakkāṇe. Tiruvāymoḻi - 5-8-4
 21 Viṭivahai puhudanar enru naḻvediyar
 paṭiyinil paṇkinil pāṭaṅkal kaḻvinar
 nūṭiyum narcunnamum niraik uṭavilakkamum
 maṭimukamaṭanaiyar enṭinar vande. Tiruvāymoḻi - 10-9-10

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Śaraṇāgati - in Śaiva Siddhānta

DR. S.P. SABHARATNAM

Śaiva Siddhānta, also known as *Agama Siddhānta* and *Āgamānta*, is primarily a religio-philosophical system, which has taken its roots in the Vedas and well grounded in the *Śaivāgamas*. However, the Vedic side of *Śaiva Siddhānta* has not so far been given adequate attention and systematic analysis as its Āgamic side has been given. The main reason for this is the negligence of Āgamic-based Vedic studies. Inadequacy in the study of the Vedas as well as the Āgamas is getting augmented presently in Tamilnadu, where there is a trend to project *Śaiva Siddhānta* as a system based only on Tamil *Tirumurai* (12 in number) and Tamil *Siddhānta Śāstras* (14 in number). But the fact is that even in these Tamil sources, the Vedic and the Āgamic basis of *Śaiva Siddhānta* has been well acknowledged and extolled. As far as the Tamil *Siddhānta Śāstras* are concerned, they are based only on the *vidya pada* (philosophical section) of all the *Mūlāgamas* and the *Upāgamas*. Even these Tamil works provide only a fragmentary exposition of the principles enshrined in the *Śaivāgamas*. It is true that one could understand the basic principles of *Śaiva Siddhānta* by studying these Tamil works. But, for an elaborate, extensive and deep understanding of each principle of *Śaiva Siddhānta*, the *Śaivāgamas* are absolutely indispensable. Aversion and prejudiced attitude towards Sanskrit do prevent the Tamil-oriented scholars of Tamilnadu to have an undistorted vision of *Śaiva Siddhānta* as systematized and embodied in the *Śaivāgamas* (available only in Sanskrit).

A *Rgvedic mantra* is explained here, as an example, to show that *Śaiva Siddhānta* is rooted in the Vedas.

"apathayo vipathayo antaspatha anupathah,

etabhirmahyam namabhiryajnam vistara ohate" (RV. 5-52-10)

"0, Lords of worlds who are in the form of *varnadhva*, *padadhva* and *matradhva*, who are in the *bhuvanadhva*, *tattvadhva*

and *kaladhva!*, whatever be the discipline undertaken by us, be gracious to accept it, and present before us in this *dikṣā-yajña*. Bestow your bounteous grace for the benefit of the world”.

The concept of *sadadhva*, which is one of the key concepts of *Śaiva Siddhānta*, figures here in this *mantra*. This particular *mantra* is recited by the initiating preceptor during the performance of *Śiva dikṣā*.

Like the *mantra* explained above, there are hundreds of vedic *mantras* echoing and reflecting the important concepts and principles related to the Āgamic *yoga* system and the metaphysics and theology of *Śaiva Siddhānta*. Now, the concept of *Śaraṇāgati* as expounded in the Āgamic *Siddhānta* is explained here.

Śaraṇāgati from the perspective of Śaktipāta:

Śaraṇāgati, meaning the total and unconditional surrender to *Guru* and to the Supreme Lord has been emphasized in *Śaiva Siddhānta* as the most essential spiritual discipline to be observed and undertaken by every seeker. It is the most effective and fruitful technique offered to the aspirant by which he can keep his soul free from the limiting adjuncts and the polluting additives. Such a spiritual discipline is to be inevitably observed by an aspirant who is intent on being uplifted and redeemed by the *Guru*, in whose form and action the Supreme Lord presents himself.

Like *sadadhva*, *saktipata* is another key concept in *Śaiva Siddhānta*. The occurrence of *saktipata* is preceded by two events - equaling of karmic effects (*karma samya*) and the ripening of the veiling impurity of the soul (*mala paripaka*). The awakening power of Lord Siva, (the *unmilani sakti* as named in the *Pauskaragama*) descends on those aspirants who have intense desire in getting re-established in *sivatva*. This descent of *sakti* takes place in four modes according to the nature of awareness and attitude blossomed within the aspirant. The *Mrgendragama* states:

*Yesam saririnam saktih patatyavinivrttaye
tesam tallingamutsukyam muktau dveso bhuvanasthitau
bhaktisca sivabhaktesu sraddha tacchasake vidhau*". (5:4,5)

The aspirant possessing such qualities, on whom the *sakti* has descended, is directed from within to approach a proper *Guru*

and perform the total and unconditional surrender to him (*Śaraṇāgati*). Lord Siva is responsible for bringing about the edifying meeting between the disciple and the *Guru*. Without the spontaneous, working of Śiva's grace, such a meeting between the disciple and the *Guru* cannot take place. It is Lord's grace that directs the disciple to take 'Śaraṇāgati' in *guru's* feet. The *Matangāgama* states:

*"preraṇaḥ prerakaḥ śrīmān 'dvayorapi sa mantraṇāt
anugrahyasya vinaye tathānugrāhakasya ca
kāruṇye tvanayor yasmāt tayoryogaḥ sudurlabhaḥ"*

"Lord Siva, who is the Knower of all and who is the Designer and Master of mantra, directs both the yearning aspirant and the perfect *Guru* and instills humility in the mind of the aspirant and abounding compassion in the heart of *Guru*. Without such gracious work of the Supreme Lord, the union of the disciple and the *Guru* is absolutely impossible"

The disciple, as directed by Siva's grace approaches the *Guru* destined for him and supplicates:

*"śaraṇam gatosmi tvaipāda paṅkaje dvandvarahite
ajñānatimiram bhūtvā sivaṁ darśaya me prabho"*

Svaraṇjanottara Āgama: YogaPāda

Śaraṇāgati from the perspective of Śivapūjā

In Āgamic terminology, *Śaraṇa* means the main shrine of a Śiva temple. It also denotes the shrine properly designed within one's own house. Most of the *Āgamas* provide specific directions for the performance of *Śivapūjā* and *Śiva darśana* within the house and in temple respectively, all the related activities being energized and fructified by the continuous flow of the attitude of *Saraṇāgati*.

Śaraṇāgati from the perspective of Sivayoga

The *yoga* system maintained in the *Śaiva Siddhānta* is par excellence. It categorically states that the attitude of *Śaraṇāgati* is to be kept continuously even by the *Yogins* and the *Siddhas*. Under the context of *Siva yoga*, *Śaraṇa* means the minute central space manifesting in each *ādhāra* (from *mūlādhāra* upto *dvādaśānta*). The

perfect *yogi* is expected to install himself at each minute space of such *ādhāras* to derive the essentially needed spiritual and cosmic powers. How this kind of *Śaraṇāgati* is performed by the *yogins* - is explained, based on the *yoga* section of the *Sarvajñānottara Agama*.

Tamil devotional hymns and *Śaraṇāgati*

The last three *sūtras* of *Śivajana bodham*, the most important Tamil work based on the *Raurava Agama* and the verses of *Śivajñāna Siddhiyar* (Tamil work) related to those *sūtras* bring out the importance of the effective spiritual discipline known as *Śaraṇāgati*. There are number of melodious hymns of *Tevāram* and *Tiruvācakam* and rhythmic songs of *Tiruppugal* useful for the performance of *Śaraṇāgati*.

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Śaraṇāgati - Writings from Advaita

DR (MRS.) UMAMAHESHWARI SHANKAR

Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara is primarily a non-dualistic system. Śaṅkara was a great *jñāni*, a philosopher a *yogi* and undoubtedly a *bhakta-prapanna*. From time immemorial seers and saints have recognized the ultimate fusion of *jñāna* and *bhakti*. Śaṅkara being an *advaitin* was not a spurious intellectual to disregard or neglect *bhakti* in his system. Śaṅkara by birth was a *bhakta* and by profession a philosopher. Man is incurably religious. There is a need for an object to fix in devotion. Śaṅkara through many of his compositions has immortalized *bhakti*. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, “*Bhakti* is a continuous recognition of a wholehearted response to a source of all goodness”. Śaṅkara’s hymns represent a blend of philosophy and poetry. One can enjoy the poetic beauty as well as experience the deeper philosophic truth in his works. Most of the truth sprang from him spontaneously when he visited the hallowed places of worship. He felt the presence of God and hence his compositions are inspirational outpourings. It is in *bhakti* the devotee knows God fully and enters into the godhood. One finds fulfillment and peace too. *Śaraṇāgati* implies total surrender i.e. to take refuge in God in an unconditional framework. In his writing, we find a clear distinction between *śaraṇya* the Lord of all, *śaraṇāgata* the seeker, and *śaraṇāgati* the process of seeking.

Śaraṇāgati has a Universal appeal to young and old, poor and rich, man, woman, and so on. *Bhakti* highlights the intense love of the devotee. When the mind melts God alone becomes the object of his vision. The union of *śaraṇya* and *śaraṇāgata* takes place. Śaṅkara in *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* (33.5) says, “The idea of personal God is the fusion of the highest logical truth with the deepest religious conviction. *Śaraṇāgati* is one ultimate goal, hence we must select one of the objects for meditation, that suits our temper.” He too seems to enjoy the bliss in that union when he surrendered to lord Kṛṣṇa. The hymn ‘*Kṛṣṇāṣṭakam*’ was composed when his mother was in her deathbed. The refrain in the hymn is:

*Vinā yasya dhyānaṁ praṇanti paśutāṁ sūkaramukhāṁ
 Vinā yasya jñānaṁ janimṛtibhayaṁ yāti janatā/
 Vinā yasya smṛtyā kṛmīśatajanim yāti sa vibhuḥ
 Śaraṇyo lokaśo mama bhavatu kṛṣṇo'kṣiṣayah//*

‘May, you the lord Krishna, become the basic object of my surrender’. In contrast to this, in *Jagannāthāṣṭakam* he says – ‘Svāmi Jagannātha nayanapathagāmī bhavatu me’.

*Na vai prārthyaṁ rājyaṁ na ca kanakatā bhogavibhavae
 Na yāce'haṁ ramyaṁ nikhilajanakāmyāṁ varavadhūm/
 Sadā kāle kāle pramathapatinā gītacarito jagannāthaḥ svāmi
 nayanapathagāmī bhavaatu me//*

Śaraṇāgati, the highest form of *bhakti* affirms the presence of God. It takes various aspects of prayer and worship of deity in various connotations. A true *bhakta* not only offers material things to God but his very life. *Śaraṇāgati* implies the important idea that one who is truly devoted to a deity considers every action, no matter how trivial or frivolous, as an act of devotion, an offering to that Supreme divine deity. In *Gītā* Lord asks his seekers to dedicate all the actions to Him and abide in peace. Arjuna finally says – “*karīṣye vacanam tava*” as a mark of Surrender. The Lord says:

*Daivī hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā/
 Māmeva ye prapadyante māyāmetāṁ taranti te//*

‘The divine *māyā* of mine, consisting of modes, is difficult to overcome. But those who take refuge in me alone cross beyond it’.

Worship we must. How can one enjoy that ineffable bliss? How can a ritual be performed? *Ācārya* says by ‘*Upāsana*’. In the *Gītābhāṣya* he writes :

*‘Upāsanaṁ nāma yathāśāstramupāsyasyārthasya
 viśayikaraṇena sāmīpyamupagamya tailadhārāvat
 samānapratyayappravāheṇa dīrghakālam yadāsanam
 tadupāsanaṁcakṣate’*

‘The deity has to be contemplated, according to the scriptures. The object of worship must be approached nearly and dwelling on it for along time steadily in continuous thought like the flow of oil poured from one container in to another.’

By *bhakti* an aspirant can know God to the greatest extent Lord declared, “He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in Me, to him I am not lost and he is not lost to Me.”

On Āśraya in his *Gītābhāṣya* (18.62), he writes-
*Tameva śaraṇam gaccha sarvabhāvena bhārata/
 Tatprasādāt parām śāntim sthānam prāpsyasi śāśvataṁ//*

'That shelter is the abode of Viṣṇu, a comforting place for devotees who are afflicted by birth and death'.

Lord speaks of different kinds of devotion in *Gītā*:
*Caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino'rjuna/
 Ārto jijñāsuarthārthi jñāni ca bhārataṣabha//
 Teṣāṁ jñāni nityayuktaḥ ekabhaktirviśiṣyate/
 Priyo hi jñānino'tyarthamaham sa ca mama priyaḥ//*

"The virtuous that worship Me are of four kinds, the ones who are in distress, the seekers of knowledge, the ones who desire wealth and the men of wisdom. Of these the wise, who is in constant union with the divine, his devotion is supreme, and single minded. Therefore, he is the Best. He is dear to Me."

*Eṣā brāhmī sthūtiḥ pārtha nainām prāpya vimuhyati/
 Sthitvāśyāmantakāle'pi brahmanirvāṇamṛcchati || Gītā 2/72*

"This is the divine state - *Brāhmī sthūti*, Oh! Arjuna, having attained one is not again bewildered, fixed in that state at the end one can attain the bliss of God."

*Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī maṁ namaskuru/
 Māmevaiśyasi satyaṁ te pratijāne priyosi me||*

Lord says, "Fix thy mind on Me, have faith in Me. Sacrifice to Me, salute Me, so thou shall come to Me, I promise truly that you are dear to Me."

We must let our selves go in a simple, sustained with sincerity, trustful surrender of oneself to God.

Devotion in religious sphere includes ardent affection, zealous attachment, piety, dedication, reverence, respect, awe, loyalty, fidelity and so on. Ācārya Śaṅkara in his compositions explores all the aspects of devotion in a beautiful manner. Let us see some of them In *Saundaryalahari* which literally means Waves of ecstasy flowing from the vision of Beauty Supreme, Śaṅkara pours his heart out in the form of exquisite poetry. He prays:

*Japo jalpaḥ śilpaṁ sakalamapi mudrāviracanā
 Gatih prādakṣīnyakramaṇamaśanādyāhutividhiḥ/
 Pranāmaḥ samveśaḥ sukhamakhilamātmārpaṇaḍṛśā
 Saparyāparyāyastava bhavatu yanme vilasitām//*

This verse is the quintessence of *Saundaryalaharī* and the ultimate stand of the seeker.

“Oh! Mother, Let all my prattle be prayerful muttering and manifold activity your worshipful mode; let all my wanderings be circumambulating; the food and drink I imbibe, the offering in the fire; my lying down in rest, be prostration to you. And all my joy in life, homage and surrender.”

Is this not a complete surrender in its true spirit? Humility is what makes men great. Śaṅkara says in the concluding verse of *Saundaryalaharī*:

*Prādīpajvālābhirdivasakara nīrājanavidhiḥ
Sudhācūṭeḥ candropalajalalavairarghyaracanā/
Svakiyairambhobhiḥ salilanidhisauhityakaraṇam
Tvadīyābhirvāgbhīstava janani vācāṁ stutiriyam//*

“Oh! Mother! In rendering this hymn. I am like one who offers oblation to the moon from the water oozing from the moon stone, like one who waves light before the sun, the source of all brilliance or like one who offers water in adoration to the sea-god taking water from the sea! You are my learning and my inspiration. These poems of praise, spring from my heart through your grace alone!”

In *bhakti* and *śaraṇāgati* the ways of adoration and worship may vary. The emptying of the mind and obliterating of the ego-sense will lead to the realization of self or God. Time and again it is the mind that binds as well as releases the individual. It is said “Mind must be cleansed and use it as an altar for the deity to reside. Śaṅkara in his *Sivānandalaharī* conveys the restless nature of the mind and the need for it to be rooted in devotion. In this verse he says:

*Sadā mohāṭavyām carati yuvatinām kucāgīrau
Naṭatyāśāśākhāsvatati jhaṭīti svairamabhītaḥ/
Kapālin bhikṣo me hṛdayakapimatyantacapalaṁ
Dṛḍhaṁ bhaktyā baddhvā śiva bhavadadhīnaṁ-kuru vibho//*

“Oh! Śiva! Oh! Mendicant, the mind ever roams in the forest of delusion, leaps in all directions and moves from desire to desire like a monkey. Accepting it as my offering, bind it firmly with the cord of devotion and bring it to Thy control.” On similar lines he compares the mind with an elephant in rut. He says, “Oh! Supreme

lord, the mind is moving in all directions. Please with the cord of devotion seize it tactfully and lead it firmly to the place of stability.”

Śaṅkara is referred as ‘*Śaṅmata sthāpanācārya*’, one who standardized six religious traditions - namely the worship of Gaṇeśa, Skanda, Śiva, Divine mother, Sūrya and Viṣṇu. He did not make any distinction on the deities; they were different forms of same God. *Viṣṇusahasranāmastotra* is a litany of 1000 names of Lord Viṣṇu. The Lord is one and the names are many. They denote their attributes, power and beauty. In his benedictory verse, he says, “This adorable hymn of thousand names of Supreme Personality Who is endowed with thousand eyes, faces, feet and arms, and it is now being commenced upon for the sake of overcoming birth and death.” Śaṅkara’s *Bhāṣya* occupies a pride place among the other commentaries. To illustrate one of the names of Viṣṇu is *Śiśirah*, Śaṅkara explains the word as ‘*Tāpatrayābhīptānām viśrāmasthānavat Śiśirah*’. He is the ultimate refuge of all who are afflicted by the three kinds of pain - physical, mental and supernatural. To such men He is like a dewy season giving much comfort. Worship of Viṣṇu is the worship of Universe.

For the ordinary folks, Śaṅkarācārya composed very many hymns and *Stotras*, which are reverentially chanted even today in our homes. In his *Gaṇeśa Pañcaratnam*, he extols the beauty of the tusker and says –

*Sureśvaram nidhīśvaram gajeśvaram gaṇeśvaram
maheśvaram tamāśraye parātparam nīrantaram//*

“Wielder of wealth, ruler of celestials. Of Sovereign lord, the primal cause of *Māyā*, I worship him, I take refuge in Him!” On his brother Lord Subrahmaṇya, he composed 33 verses in a peculiar *Bhujāṅga* meter. It reveals the efficacy of prayer and meditation.

Śaṅkara’s purpose is to guide the seeker to God-realization. When the relationship between God and devotee is intimate one takes liberty with him too. Śaṅkara says:

*Viśāleṣu kaṇāntadīrghaśvajasraṁ dayāsyandiṣu
dvādaśasvikṣaṇeṣu/*

*Mayīṣatkaṭākṣaḥ sakṛtpātitaśced bhavette dayāśila kā nāma
hāniḥ//*

“Your twelve expansive eyes shed rays of benevolent grace. Even if a particle of that gracious glance falls on me. I’m blessed. Tell me, as I worship what do you loose?” Later, he surrenders totally

and says - 'Prabho tārakāre sadā rakṣamām tvam' 'Oh! Enemy of Titan Tāraka, you protect me at all times!' In many places, the aspect of śaraṇāgati is direct while in others the compositions illustrate his care and concern for the struggling humanity. He says - 'Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam, Govindam Bhaja mūdhamate'.

'Worship Govinda, Oh fool, in you, in me and elsewhere there is one Viṣṇu who is all pervading.' Let us see Śrī Lakṣmī-narahsiṃha Karuṇārāsa Stotra. He says to Lord Narasiṃha, "You live in the hearts of devotees such as Prahlāda, Nārada, Parāśara, Puṇḍarīka, Vyāsa and the like. You ever fulfill the desire of Your devotees. Oh! Narasiṃha, extend your hand to save me." He later says:

Saṃsāraghoragahane carato murāre
mārograbhikaramṛgapracurārditasya/

Ārtasya matsaranidāghasuduhkṛtasya lakṣmīnṛsiṃha mama
dehi karāvalambam//

'Roaming in the vast woods of Saṃsāra, troubled by the roaming animals of desire and afflicted by envy, I am Oh Lord, in great distress. Please give your helping hand.'

Goddess Pārvatī has various names Lalitā, Umā Bhavānī, Tripurasundarī, etc. Each name of divine mother is not a mere arrangement of letters but also has māntric potency. In his Bhavānī-bhujāṅga, there is a direct surrender conveyed like a child running to her mother. He says -

Śaraṇye vareṇye sukāruṇyamūrte
hiraṇyodarādyairaganye supuṇye/
bhavāraṇyabhiteśca mām pāhi bhadre
namaste namaste namaste bhavāni//

'Oh! Most excellent bounty of kindness! There salutations to You. You are my sole refuge. I quake with fear in the dark woods of transmigration. Celestials like Brahmā cannot access your greatness. Do save me.' In the same Stotra he pleads - 'Stuṭim kartumicchāmi te tvam bhavāni kṣamasvedamatra pramugdhaḥ kilāham' - 'I wish to sing your glories. But please forgive me for this childish chatter.'

Devotion often focuses on rituals. His hymns are praises on lord. The deity is entreated, supplicated, adored, extolled in the mood of love, ecstasy and devotion. Some of his compositions are on

‘*Mānasa pūjā*’ i.e. mental worship. While in other hymn he describes the detail method based on *mantra-śāstra* to invoke the deity. To illustrate, ‘*Mantramātrkāpuṣpamālā Stotram*’ of Śaṅkara is a hymn on Śrī Tripurasundarī, describing the *śoḍaśa upacāra*. Each of the first 15 verses begins with one letter of *Pañcadaśī mantra*. In every verse he enquires – ‘May my service be pleasing to You. Let my prattle be your praise, my wanderings hundred circumambulations.’ ‘*Pradaḥśiṇaśatam sañcāra evāstu.*’ ‘My mind going in 1000 direction is an instrument of meditation and so on.’

Śaṅkara was indeed a true *Bhakta*. The charm and beauty of his poetry is seen in the last verse where he says:

*Iti girivaraputrīpādarājīvabhūṣā bhuvanamamalayanti
sūktisaurabhyasāraiḥ /*

*Śivapadamakarandasyandinīyaṁ nibaddhā madayatu
kavibhṛṅgān mātṛkāpuṣpamālā//*

‘This garland of *māntric* flowers fashioned by me adorns the lotus feet of the daughter of Himavān. By the fragrance of its utterances, it purifies everything. Trickling with the honey from Śiva’s lotus feet it inebriates the bee like poets with spiritual madness.’

Śaṅkara has composed a pentad on Hanumān too, i.e. *Hanumat Pañcaratnam*. The idea of *Śaraṇāgati* is obvious here too. He writes – ‘*kambugalamaniḷadiṣṭam bimbajvalitoṣṭhamekam avalambe*’

‘One who is directed by Vāyu whose lips shine like the bimba fruit, to him, I cling!’ ‘*Vātātmajam adya bhāvaye hṛdyam*’ ‘Upon the beloved son of Vāyu, I meditate today.’

Śaṅkara exhibits himself here as a devotee of the devotee! It is of course glaring to note the *advaitic bhāva* in some hymns imply the goal as surrender i.e. union, that oneness, the bliss. *Śaraṇāgati* takes the form of pilgrimage too. Undoubtedly a long trip to sacred place is a physical prayer. Śaṅkara in his short life span of 32 years moved from one shrine to another invoked the deity. Having understood the limitations of common man, he considered *bhakti* as an easy path for one and all. It can be a gradual progress. The mode is congenial and practicable. Śaṅkara visited Kāśī and there cried to Lord Viśvanātha as –

*Yātrā mayā sarvaṁ gatā hatā te dhyānena ceta paratā hatā te/
Stūnyātyā vāk paratā hatā te, kṣantavyam etat trayam eva śambho/*

‘Forgive me Oh! Śiva, my three great sins. I came as a pilgrim to Kāśī, forgetting that you are Omniscient, thinking about you, I forget that you are beyond thought, in praying to you I forget that you are beyond words.’

Bhakti has two forms, *Mārjāra-kiśora* and *Markaṭa-kiśora*. The former is where like the cat holding its kitten, the grace and love of God takes care of us. While in latter, the young ones of the monkey firmly holds the belly of its mother where the mother is not concerned. In *Śaṭpadistava* Śaṅkara says to Lord Viṣṇu-

*Satyapi bhedāgame nātha tavāham na māmakinastavaṃ/
Samudro hi taraṅgaḥ kvacana samudro na taraṅgaḥ*

“Oh! Lord, even after realizing that there is no difference between individual soul and *Brahman*, I beg to state that I am yours and not that you are mine .”

Śaraṇāgati refers to surrender to God and guru. In Advaitic tradition, God and guru are same. Guru is one who dispels darkness. He is an incarnation of that divinity which we are unable to see with our naked eyes. Surrender to Guru is an important feature in our tradition. Śaṅkara in many of his Advaitic works offers his humble salutations to his Guru. He owes his entire knowledge, strength, wisdom and skill to his Guru. In *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* - crest jewel on discrimination, he says -

*Sarvavedānta siddhānta gocaram tamagocaram/
Govindam paramānandam sadgurum praṇato'smyaham//*

“I bow to Govinda, whose nature is bliss, Who is the *sadguru*, Who can be known only from the import of all *Vedānta* and Who is beyond the reach of speech and mind.” In his hymn on *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra* he addresses his *Guru* as God, by whose grace one receives the teaching of non-duality. The need for surrender to Guru is portrayed in a lilting tone in his *Gurvaṣṭakam*. He says – “One may have all that one wishes, a good body, sound mind etc, but if one has not earned *guru's grace* nothing will avail.” *Acārya* commences *Śataśloki* with a laud on *Guru*. He says, in the three worlds there is nothing to compare with *guru*.

Dr̥ṣṭānto naiva dr̥ṣṭaḥ tribhuvana jathare sadgururjñānadātā/

A touch has the quality of converting everything into gold but cannot make by contact with touch stone. While a guru is capable of making his disciple into a replica of his own self. Thus, we find an unbroken chain of *guru-śiṣya paramparā*, a unique tradition indeed.

The same idea is reflected in his *Sarvavedāntasiddhāntasangraha* too. This piece is a finest illustration of his view on *Guru's* mercy. Even though *Guru's* mercy may be entirely devoid of motives, it is proportionate to the efforts and merits of the disciple.

It is in the form of a dialogue between *Guru* and disciple. One disciple says – “Oh! master, ocean of Mercy! Thou art a boat on the ocean of worldly life by taking refuge into which the sages have reached the other shore i.e. the supreme abode without much difficulty”.

In Advaitic tradition the codes of *Sanyāsin* are clearly spelt out. There in the duties of *Śiṣya* i.e. *Śaraṇāgata* to his guru i.e. *Śaraṇya* are hinted well. This relationship persists till the last breath. Śaṅkara treats *Bhakti* and *Śaraṇāgati* as two sides of the same coin.

Guru is one who makes us ‘Aware’, by such a complete surrender, it implies, leaving all the problems at His feet, one can remain in peace. Accept life as it comes. We shall float in the divine stream of Existence.

The fragrance of *Bhakti*, which Śaṅkara spread through his works, continued to give its charm in the works of later Advaitins i.e. his successors too. In their works too we find the aspect of *Śaraṇāgati* ostensibly stated. Like Śaṅkara his disciples have saluted their guru exhibiting *Guru Bhakti*. Sureśvara his foremost disciple, in his *Mānasollāsa* writes, “Dakṣiṇāmūrti, my obeisance, who is differently manifested in the forms of God, the teacher and the self, whose body is all pervading like ether.”

Īṣvaro gurunāmeti mūrti bhedavibhāgine/

Vyomavatvyāptadehāya dakṣiṇāmūrtaye namaḥ//

Guru is a devotee of God too. It is said:

Yasya deve parābhaktiḥ yathā deve tathā gurau/

Tasyaite kathitāhyarthaḥ prakāśante mahātmanah//

To that high-souled one, who has Supreme devotion for the preceptor as for God, shine in full, and the truths that are taught here.

Toṭakācārya another well-known disciple of Śaṅkara takes *Guru bhakti* to a great height. His surrender to Śaṅkara is total and all consuming. He writes in a meter named after him-Totaka

Viditākhiḷaśāstrasudhājāladhe mahitopaniṣatkathitārthanidhe/

Hṛdaye kalaye vimalam caraṇam bhava śaṅkara deśika me śaraṇam/

“Of Knower of Scriptures, expounder of Upaniṣads, I meditate in my heart on thy lotus feet. Be thou my refuge, O Master Śaṅkara.!!”

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a great Advaitin of 15th century, was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. He says –

*Vanśivibhūṣitakarāt navaṇīradābhāt
Pīṭambarataḥ aruṇa bimba phalādharoṣṭāt/
Pūrṇendu sundaramukhāt aravindanetrāt
Kṛṣṇāt param kimapi tattvaṁ ahaṁ na jāne//*

“I know not the truth beyond Kṛṣṇa”. Further he says, “If the mystics see the unqualified light, let them see. As of myself my only yearning is that let that bluish radiance that sports on the shores of Yamunā appear before me”. Sadāśiva Brahmendra, an *avadūtha* par-excellence, a *siddha* and a great *advaitin* has composed many beautiful devotional songs. Though rooted in *advaita* he kindles the devotional fervor in aspirants.

Candraśekhara Bhārati of Śṛṅgeri mutt, a *jīvan-mukta*, has composed *Sāmbāṣṭakam* the refrain is ‘*sarvam vyartham maraṇasamaye sām̐ba ekas saḥāyah*’

To conclude *Tasya vaśikaraṇam tasya śaraṇāgatiṛeva*.

The goal of every aspirant is happiness through God-realization or self-realization. The four forms of *Bhakti* described by Ācārya. In *Śivānandalahari* is – “*Sārūpya* is sameness in form, nearness to Śiva accomplishes *Sāmipyā*, the sameness of residence is *Sālokyā* and the company of people who are experts in Śiva devotion and the union *Sāyujya*; through meditation on thy form, being accomplished by me, Oh! Master I have reached the end.”

Meditation and contemplation must culminate in *Śaraṇāgati*. We worship that aspect of God-hood that appeals to us most. The various aspects are Pointers. Surrender is one way of Self-obliteration. As long as there is self-sense, there is an element of fear. *Śaraṇāgati* is a state of fearlessness.!!

Ajaram amaram abhayam aśokam anantam
Surrender and wait. Let the floodgates of heaven open.
Salutations to that great Śaṅkara Bhagavatpāda!
Salutations to one and all!!

Śaraṇāgati in Śrī Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇava Tenkalai Tradition (Viśiṣṭādvaita)

DR. M. VARADARAJAN

The origin of *Śaraṇāgati* is to be traced to *Vedas* and its development to *Upaniṣads*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, *Ācāryas'* hymns and *Ācāryas'* *Rahasyas*. It was Śrī Rāmānuja who popularized this doctrine to reach the common people, whereas Pillai Lokācārya of *Tenkalai* tradition systematized and enriched the doctrine. Later Maṇavāla Māmunikaḥ more flexibly analyzed it. Hence, it is necessary to know from the following pages the definition of *Śaraṇāgati*, origin of *Śaraṇāgati*, development of *Śaraṇāgati* and the doctrine of *Śaraṇāgati*.

Definition of Śaraṇāgati:

Śaraṇāgati, a Sanskrit word, means 'gone to take refuge', in which 'Śaraṇam' means 'Upāya' (means), *Grha* (house) and *rakṣitā* (protector) as stated in *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā*. 'Śaraṇāgati' is also called *Nyāsa Vidyā*, *Prapatti*, *Upāyatvapradhāna*, *Bharanyāsa*, *Sādhyā Bhakti* and so on. *Śaraṇāgati* is a kind of perception in praying the Lord as a means, as one is sinful and is not able to retrieve by other means.¹ This must be in a matter of God. *Viṣvaksena Saṁhitā* says that one is not able to accomplish one's wishes, by mere faith (*mahaviśvāsa*) to surrender before Lord as a means is called *Prapatti* or *Śaraṇāgati*.² *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says that the Lord who created *Brahmā* and delivered Him the *Vedas*, that Lord who lightened one's intellect is a refugee to attain *Mokṣa*.³ It shows the necessity of *Śaraṇāgati* for the redemption of the soul. In this way several texts defined *Śaraṇāgati*.

Origin of Śaraṇāgati:

There were few occasions in which *Prahlāda*, *Gajendra*, *Ambariṣa*, *Sugriva*, *Vibhiṣaṇa* in *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Draupadī*, *Dharmaputra* and others in *Kṛṣṇāvatāra* were benefited by *Śaraṇāgati* in the earlier *Yugas*.

With a view to liberating the people from the bondage of life and death i.e., *Samsāra*, the Lord, Himself, preached the three *Rahasyas* (Secrets) i.e., *Tirumantra*⁵ *Dvaya*⁶ and *Carmaśloka*⁷ which are the prime tools of *Śaraṇāgati* and propagated through Ālvārs. Ālvārs, twelve in number, were intoxicated in the love of God and highlighted the necessity of *Śaraṇāgati* in their hymns. To show the way, Nammālvār, the foremost among the Ālvārs, did *Śaraṇāgati* at the lotus feet of Lord Venkatesvara in his *Prabandham* i.e. *Tiruvāymoli*.⁸

Following the foot-print, of Ālvārs, Ācāryas from Śrī Nāthamuni down to Maṇavālamāmuni propagated the *Śaraṇāgatividyā*.

III. Development of *Śaraṇāgati*:

Yāmunācārya, grand son of Nāthamuni, explicitly did *Śaraṇāgati* at the feet of Lord in *Stotraratna* by saying that he has not practiced *Karma Yoga*: neither possessed *ātmajñāna* nor devotion at His holy feet; and he has no means or no other way except His feet as a means⁹

With a view to propagating Śrīvaiṣṇavism, Yāmunācārya prayed at the feet of Lord Varadarāja of *Kāñci* that Śrī Rāmānuja is to be blessed to be the edifying force and champion for the cause of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.¹⁰

It was Lord Varadarāja who cleared doubts raised by Śrī Rāmānuja and said '*Mokṣopāyah prapattiḥ syāt*' which means that total surrender is the means of liberation and another important verse is '*Pūrṇayam tu samāśraye*' which means that Rāmānuja should resort to Ācārya Periyānambi (Mahāpūrṇa) as his spiritual guide. This shows the necessity of Ācārya's guidance for doing *Śaraṇāgati*.

It is said in *Guruparamparabhāvam* that Lord Ranganātha of Srīraṅgam has given the wealth of *Ubhaya Vibhūti* (this world and *Paramapada*) to Śrī Rāmānuja and his disciples and ordered him to reign them, when he prostrated before Lord, after taking sainthood.¹²

Śrī Rāmānuja, in his first text *Vedārthasaṅgraha*, says that the release of the soul from the birth in the form of its natural conjunction with *Prakṛti*, which is due to *Karma* and consists in various *guṇas* is impossible without resorting to the Lord.¹³

Although Śrī Rāmānuja was faithful to *Sāstras*, with a view to conquering the *kudṛṣṭi*, he wrote *Śrībhāṣya* and other seven texts by hiding *Prapatti-vidyā* which is to be received from an *Ācārya*'s grace and explicitly propagated *Bhakti* in those texts. But by showing his desire and faith on *Śaraṇāgati*, he expressed his self-surrender in *Śaraṇāgati-Gadya*.

Actually *Śaraṇāgati* is more prominent than *Bhakti*, as *Bhakti* is restricted to only the first three *Varnas*. *Śaraṇāgati* is for all, irrespective of caste, creed, place, gender, and so on: *Bhakti* is difficult to practice; this is easy to do with faith; the fruition is delayed in *Bhaktiyoga*; here, the fruition is quick i.e., in the present life itself. In *Bhaktiyoga* there are so many restrictions; here it is not so: that is practicable; this is accomplished: the practice of *Bhaktiyoga* is against the nature of soul; this is akin to the nature of soul which is always subservient to God. Such differences throw light on the supremacy of *Śaraṇāgati*.

Hence, Rāmānuja in *Śaraṇāgati-Gadya* in the first section expresses his surrender at the feet of Periya Pirāṭṭiyār (Mahālakṣmī) after extolling her greatness, and qualities, and requested Her that his surrender at the feet of Lord be made appropriate and successful.¹⁴ Further, he reiterates his surrender by renouncing father, mother, wife, children, relatives and all desires as said in *Purāṇas* showing respect for the words of *Rṣis*.¹⁵ Conveying the formal surrender, he chanted *Dvayamantra*: He seeks that he shall be blessed with the consequential experience of the Lord and yearning for service unto Him. In reply, the Lord through an inner voice conveyed that he will be totally rid of worldly misery and will spend the rest of his life in chanting the *Dvaya mantra* and meditating on its import.¹⁶

Next to Rāmānuja, the *Ācāryas* such as Embār, Piḷḷān, Naṇḍiyar, Nampīḷḷai, Periyavāccān Piḷḷai, Vādikēsari Aḷakiyamaṇavāḷa Jiyar and host of others were faithfully surrendered themselves to Rāmānuja who is the sole protector of all, as ordained by Lord Raṅganātha.

Until the emergence of Piḷḷai Lokācārya, a star of the first magnitude in the galaxy of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava divine of 13th century, there was no necessity to explain the doctrine of *Śaraṇāgati* till his period as every *ācārya* who were *prapannas* had faith in their *Ācāryas* and practised *Śaraṇāgati* according to their *Ācārya*'s *upadesa*.

It was Piḷḷai Lokācārya, who has taken full lead in explaining the nature and doctrine of Śaraṇāgati in his 18 works called *Aṣṭādaśa Rahasyas*,¹⁷ by restricting Śaraṇāgati for those who distressed very much in this mundane life and seek the way for the attainment of *Mokṣa*, whom he called *Mumukṣu*.

IV. Doctrine of Śaraṇāgati:

The doctrine of Śaraṇāgati covers several aspects, of which I am analyzing the following. They are: Theme of three *Rahasyas*, Mahālakṣmī as *Puruṣakāra*; No restriction to do Śaraṇāgati. Importance of *Arcā* form, Lord as 'means' and 'end', Nature of *Prapatti*, Greatness of *Paragata svikāra*, and importance of *Acārya Abhimāna*.

(I) Theme of three *Rahasyas*:

Among the 18 works, Piḷḷai Lokācārya emphasizes the necessity of knowing the theme of three *Rahasyas* for a *Prapanna*, in his work called *Mumukṣuppati*. He said that *Tirumantra* enlightens the soul, which is subservient to Śrīman Nārāyaṇa should not claim its individuality; all *kainkaryas* (services), should be done to the Lord who is a *Sarvaśeṣi*.¹⁸ This is the prayer for a soul to pray before the Lord and get the unstinted revelation for one's true relationship with God. In *Dvaya-mantra*, the first sentence emphasizes that the soul, if it wishes to attain *Mokṣa*, has no other means except to prostrate before Śrīman Nārāyaṇa with the recommendation of Mahālakṣmī.

The second sentence states that the aspirant has to do *Kainkarya* in the presence of both Śrīman Nārāyaṇa and His consort Mahalakṣmī.¹⁹ In the *Carama-sloka*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that to give up all *Dharmas* or rites unintentionally and surrender to Him alone and He will release him from all sins and grant *Mokṣa*.²⁰

With a view to creating awareness among the aspirants who desire to do Śaraṇāgati for attaining *Mokṣa*, Lokācārya succinctly elaborated the three *rahasyas* in his other works, particularly *Śrīvacanabhūṣanam* and framed concrete doctrines for doing Śaraṇāgati.

(II) Mahalakṣmī as *Puruṣakāra* :

The essential recommendatory role of Mahalakṣmī, as *Puruṣakāra* for a *prapanna* is necessary as she had three essential

traits i.e., compassion, subservience to Lord and exclusive dependence on Lord. This is highlighted in the *Dvaya mantra*, first sentence first word 'Śrī'.

(iii) No restriction to do Śaraṇāgati:

Pillai Lokācārya says that there is no pre-condition to do *Śaraṇāgati* in a particular place, the time, particular type, eligibility, its fruits, but the only thing that matters is where exactly *Prapatti* should be performed, i.e., the Lord unto whom one should surrender for the accomplishment of one's cherished desire or objective.²¹ While explaining the *Sūtra*, Maṇavāla Māmuni says that *Prapatti* means taking Lord as refuge. There is no restriction to do *Prapatti* about the place where it is done; no restriction to do it in a particular season; no exclusion of persons not belonging to the first three castes (i.e., *sūdras*) and there is no restriction in getting particular benefit for a particular *sādhana*.²²

(iv) Importance of Arcā Form:

It requires to do *Śaraṇāgati* in a place where the ocean of innumerable excellence that exists in *Arcā* form only,²³ than the Lord's other manifestation i.e., *Para*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava* and *Antaryāmi Svarūpa*.²⁴ It is said that Ālvārs did *Śaraṇāgati* in several places only in *Arcā* form.²⁵

Pillai Lokācārya reveals the three types of *Prapannas* who seek the Lord's grace in His *Arcā* form. They are (i) those who are devoid of knowledge to practice other means for experiencing the God called *Ajñas*; (ii) those who got wisdom (*Jñāna*) and energy (*śakti*) and having known one's real nature (of soul) i.e. subservience to God and discard other means which are enemies for the nature of Soul called *Jñānādhikāra*; (iii) those who are soaked in God's love and in their state of ecstasy cannot lift their minds off and steady themselves and are called *bhaktiparavaśas*.²⁶

Pillai Lokācārya, in another *sūtra*, refers Bhaṭṭar's version that Sage Śaunaka has referred to these three categories of subjects, as being unaware of any means other than the Lord, who, for them, at once becomes the 'Means' and the 'End'.²⁷

Mahālakṣmī in *Lakṣmītantra* says that *Prapatti* is a means for those who are illiterate; for wise persons; for those who wants to cross the *Samsara* in *Kaivalya*niṣṭhā; and for those who want to have

experience of God's nature, *vigraha*, attributes etc., and not able to bear in mind without the experience of God.²⁸

(v) Lord as a 'Means' and 'End':

Lokācārya further states that if *Prapatti* is resorted to, as a personal effort of the individual soul and looked upon as a means for securing protection from the Lord, instead of looking upon the Lord as a sole means, the Means and the End rolled into one, it would be just as absurd as a grown up son calling upon his father to sign a written undertaking to take care of the former.²⁹

Usually for Means other than the Lord, the disparity of that means and the 'end' will be wide. But in the case of *Prapatti* there is no such disparity between Means and End both are Lord only. Lokācārya rightly explains with an example that it is like beckoning a cow by showing a handful of grass and feeding the same grass when, it comes nearer.³⁰ This conveys that the feet of Lord as 'means' and that feet is attainable as an 'end' both combined in one i.e., Lord. There is no difference in the subject, but in the thought.³¹ Since the Lord who is instrumental for both as 'Means' and 'End' there is no meaning for *Prapatti*, as the gesture of expressing submission before attaining the fruition and after doing *Prapatti* i.e., the Lord as a Means, will always be with felicity.³²

Commenting the nature of *Prapatti* in a *sūtra*, Maṇavāla Māmuni says that there is an inherent risk of *Prapatti* being included along with other Means i.e., *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Bhakti yogas* and looked upon as the means of attaining the Lord, which undoubtedly the other disciplines are. But the distinguishing character of *Prapatti*, is, that it cannot tolerate its being looked upon as the Means for attaining the Lord.³³ Cautioning against the *Prapatti* being considered as a Means, Piḷḷai Lokācārya says that the Lord as the direct Means and the sole protector, neither needs nor shelter any external aids. *Prapatti* is just a conveyor or a mere node and that is why it does not tolerate any other means besides declining to consider itself as a means.³⁴ In another *sūtra*, he enlightens that the basic knowledge of servitude (*Śeṣatva*) to God and knowing that He is the protector, and not obstructing the protectiveness of God which means remaining in a state of passive stir are necessary to get the fruition.³⁵

He further says that if one performs *Prapatti* to escape from the danger of *Samśāra* by the Grace of God, it means that he will be

courting a greater danger.³⁶ Hence he says that the Lord is said to await the desire of the people for protection at His hands as said in *Lakṣmītantra* that looks for his prayer for protection.³⁷ Although the Lord has always been remembering His property i.e., the sentient beings and thinking of their redemption, all the time, this will not materialize as the individuals will not be thinking of Him as their own mentor and protector.³⁸ This will be accomplished when the individual gives up his self effort for protection.³⁹

In another *sūtra*, Piḷḷai Lokācārya succinctly describes the usefulness of nature of soul i.e. *Śeṣatva* (servitude to God) and exclusive dependence on the Lord (*Pāraṇtrya*) which are the sole characters for a *Prapanna*. Elaborating the *sūtra*, Māmuni says that the individual, being wise and doer of *prapatti*, should not take any effort in the attainment of Lord. That is the result of *Pāraṇtrya*; and the individual being wise and gaining the enjoyment of God's experience as his fruit, must be negated and to create happiness to Lord, being *Śeṣatva*. This enlightens *Seṣatva* and *Pāraṇtrya* are the two traits of the soul.⁴⁰

Lokācārya establishes that *Prapatti* is above faults of any kind, as this is the act of true nature of soul i.e., its exclusive dependence on the Lord and this totally freed from the involvement of self-effort.⁴¹ He further opines that the mere fact that the individual who had for ages not thought of God, has now turned towards Him and also submitted himself for His protection, makes the Lord to feel more jubilant.⁴²

Lokācārya explains lucidly two types of *Śaraṇāgati*. They are *Ārta Prapatti* and *Dr̥pta Prapatti*. One can practice *Śāstras* by the grace of God and can obtain *Upadeśa* from *Ācārya*. Then he gets real knowledge. He feels that his body is an obstacle for the experience of God; likewise he feels the place and relationship of *Ācārya*. Then to have experience of God by seeking the *Deśa*, body and *Ācārya* quickly, he will perform *Śaraṇāgati*. Nammālvār in several hymns cross questioned the Lord for not showing His grace to take him away from this world. This is called *Ārtaprapatti*. *Dr̥taprapatti* means that, one, to get revelation of God, has to approach a good *Ācārya* and from his initiation he will seek God as refuge; stage by stage he will know the nature of God and soul and their relations.⁴³

It is generally believed that after performing *Śaraṇāgati*, *Prapanna* has no chance of doing sin knowingly or unknowingly

because he is under constant protection and guidance of God. His sole ambition is to be relieved from the bondage of *Samsāra* and get rid of all his sins of the past. But as a general theory as long as the *Prapanna* lives in the world, he cannot overcome the effects of *Prārabdhakarma*. But as a human being he may commit some mistakes. Again doing *Śaraṇāgati* is objectionable according to *śāstras*. In such a situation, Māmuni explains that for the word 'prapadye' in the first sentence of *Dvaya mantra*, he says that Rāma has taken a vow to rescue that one who performs *Śaraṇāgati* only once and one who shows that he is in servitude to Him. He states that one who, by his *rājasa* and *tāmasa guṇas*, changes to other means and regrets later for his mistake and performs *Śaraṇāgati* which was once done, will not be considered more than once and considers it as effulgence for continuity of his *satva-guṇa*.⁴⁴

(vii) Greatness of *Paragata Svikāra*:

The important aspect of *Prapatti* as revealed by Lokācārya is *Paragata Svikāra* which means the Lord seeks the hand of an individual, even his grave sins will in no way obstruct.⁴⁵ But the individual trying to get hold of the Lord, is called *Svagata Svikāra*. It is a moment in the reverse gear which will misfire, despite all the merits claimed for *prapatti*.⁴⁶ One can see example for *Svagata Svikāra*, the *Śaraṇāgati* performed by Bharata before Rāma imploring him to get back to Ayodhyā. But that was not materialized as Rāma's thoughts did not coincide with Bharata's trend of thinking. In the case of *Paragata Svikāra*, for example, *Śaraṇāgati* performed by Guha, a hunter, was voluntarily courted by Rāma and they became friends.⁴⁷ Here Māmuni refers the saying of Kūreśa that what that is liked by the Lord is called *punya*; and what that is not liked, *pāpa*.⁴⁸

Highlighting the greatness of *Paragata Svikāra*, Lokācārya says that the Lord has two attributes namely compassion for those who seek refuge in Him and spontaneous grace on the individuals whether they deserve it or not. The latter is superior as Lord's independence goes on uninterrupted.⁴⁹ This is well received in the *Upaniṣads* that this soul cannot be grasped by explication, nor by mere knowledge, nor by great erudition: he alone, whom God Himself elects can attain Him; He singles his soul out to serve as His body.⁵⁰ This can be seen when Rāma showered His grace - unsolicited on Guha and Hanumān. This is *Paragata Svikāra*.⁵¹

(viii) Importance of Ācārya Abhimāna:

Lastly, the characteristic of *Prapatti* is *Ācārya Abhimāna*, which Lokācārya gave much importance in several *sūtras* in *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*. He says that by approaching God is like one who requests him by holding His hands to get the things done: by approaching an *Ācārya* is like holding the feet of *Ācārya* i.e., surrendering him and get the things done definitely. *Ācārya* helps in helping both God and his disciple. *Ācārya* helps God by introducing the disciple and his disciple by showing his relationship with *Śeṣi* i.e., God.⁵² The relationship of God is common to get one into *Samsāra* according to one's *Karma* and get one as a *mukta* by showing kindness whereas the relationship of *Ācārya* is the cause of redeeming from *Samsāra* and to get *Mokṣa*. The help rendered by God is great, as He enlightens a good *Ācārya Abhimāna* (Grace will enlighten the disciple). Hence God's help is greater than that of *Ācārya*.⁵³

He finally establishes that *Ācārya Abhimāna* (Grace) will enlighten the disciple, the three states of *Śeṣarūpa* (servitude to God), *Upāya* (God as a Means), and *Puruṣārtha* (to do *Kainkarya* to God) as derived from *Tīrumantra*, Pillai Lokācārya says '*Ācārya Abhimāname uttārakam*'.

Apart from *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*, *Mumukṣuppaṭi*, and *Navaratnamāla*, in other texts, Lokācārya enumerated the essential characteristics of *Prapanna* for acquiring *Mokṣa*.

To conclude, I wish to say that Pillai Lokācārya stresses the necessity of *Ācāryābhimāna*, which is like *aṅga* for *Prapatti* and other means and independent. He showed with ease, that *Śaraṇāgati* is for those who are not able to do *Bhakti*; *Ācārya Abhimāna* is for those who are not able to do *prapatti*.⁵⁵ *Ācāryābhimāna*, firstly realizes an aspirant and *caramopāya* i.e., *Ācārya* as a means from *Bhagavat Ananyārha Śeṣarūpa* i.e. subservient only to God like withered leaf for long years of aloofness and tender leaf sprouting on a stalk; spiritually revitalized soul blossoms into service to God's devotees like a flower yielding fruit, then the love of *Ācārya* alone, matters in the final analysis of redeeming the soul to do *kainkarya*.⁵⁶ Following Pillai Lokācārya, Maṇavāla Māmuni in his text *Upadeśaratnamālai* says that Lord along with Mahālakṣmī will grant *Vaikunṭha* for those who approach and acquire the grace of an *Ācārya* who satisfactorily gained *jñāna* and *anuṣṭhāna*.

Alvār Emperumānār Jiyar Tiruvatikale Śaraṇam.

Notes and References

1. *upāye grharakṣitroḥ śabdaḥ śaraṇamityayam/
vartate sāmpratam caiṣa upāyārthaika vācakaū//.*
(*Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* 36.36)
2. *ahamasmi aparādhānām ālayaḥ akincano agatīḥ/
tvamevopāyabhūto me bhavetī prārthanāmatīḥ//.*
saraṇāgaūritiyukū sā deve asmin prayujyātām/. (A.Sa 37.30-31).
3. *upāye grharakṣitroḥ śabdaḥ śaraṇamityayam.
vartate sāmpratam caiṣa upāyārthaika vācakaḥ ..*
(*Ahīrbudanya Samhitā* 36.36)
4. *yo brahmāṇam vidadhāti pūrvam
yo vai vedāmśca prahīnoti tasmai
tam ha devam ātmabuddhiprasādam
mumukṣurvai śaraṇamaham prapadye*
(*Śvetāśvataropaniṣat* 6.13)
5. It is said that Śrīman Nārāyaṇa preached *Tirumantra* i.e., ‘*Om Namō Nārāyaṇāya*’ to Nara in Badarikāśrama. This is called *Mūlamantra* and King of *Mantras* (*Manīrarājah*) since this *mantra* is secret in nature, it is called *Mantra-rahasyam*.
6. Lord Viṣṇu preached *Dvayamantra* to His consort Mahālakṣmī (*Periya Pirāṭṭi*) in *Viṣṇu Loka* as follows: *Śrīman Nārāyaṇacaraṇau śaraṇam prapadye; Śrī-mate Nārāyaṇāya Namaḥ*. In *Pāñcarātra*, *Dvayamantra* is called *Manīraratnam* (jewel among *Mantras*) and this is practical in nature and hence it is called *Anuṣṭhāna Rahasyam*. Since *Dvayamantra* enlightens the meaning of *Tirumantra*, it is called *Manīraratnam*.
7. Lord Kṛṣṇa preached Arjuna in the war front in Kurukṣetra the *carama śloka* as follows: ‘*Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja/
aham tvā sarvapapebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ//*
This is called *Vidhī Rahasyam*, as Lord Kṛṣṇa ordered Arjuna to follow his *dharma*.
8. *Akalakillen irayum enru alarṁel maṅkai uṇaimārbā
nikaril pukaḷāy! ulakam mūṇṇaiyāy! enṇaiyālvāne!
nigaril amarar muṇikkanaṅkaḷ virumpum ūruveṅkaṭṭāne
pukalonṇillā aṭiyen uṇaṭikkiḷ amarntu pukundeṇe.*
(*Tiruvāymoḷi* 6.10.10)
9. *Na dharmānīḍūo’smi na cātmavedē
na bhaktimān tvaccaraḥaravinde/
Akincano’ananyagatīḥ śaraṇyaḥ!
tvatpādamūlam śaraṇam prapadye//.*
(*Stotraratnam Sloka* 22)
10. *yasya prasāda kalayā badiraḥ sṛṇoti
paṅguḥ pradhāvati javena ca vakti mūkaḥ/
andhah prapaśyati sutam labhate ca vandhyā
tam devameva varadam saraṇāgato’smiḥ*
(*Guruparamparāprabhāvam* p. 150)

11. *Guruparamparāprabhāvam* p. 168

12. *Ibid.* 183

13. *Ātmanah karmakṛta vicīraguṇamaya prakṛti samsarga rūpat saṁsārān-mokṣo bhagavat prapatī mantareṇa na upapadyate iī yuktam bhavati .*
(*Vedārtha Saṅgraha* 81)

14. *Bhagavannārāyaṇa abhimatānūrūpa svarūparūpa guṇavibhavaśvarya silādyanavadhikātiśaya asaṅkhyeya kalyāṇa guṇagaṇam padmavanālayam bhagavatim śriyam devīm nityānapāyinim niravadyām devadeva-divyamahiṣim akhilajaganmātaram asmanmātaram aśaraṇyaśarnyām ananyaśaraṇaḥ śaraṇamaham prapadye*

(*Śaraṇāgati-Gadya* 1)

15. *Pitaram mātaram dārān putrān bandhūn sakṣin gurūn/*

ratnāni dhanadhānyāni kṣetrāni ca gṛhāni ca//

sarvadharmān ca santyaṇṇa sarvakāmamāśca sākṣarān/

loka vikrānta caraṇau śaraṇam te vrajam vibho (*Śaraṇāgati-Gadya* 5)

16. *Ādhyātmika ādhibhauṣika ādhidaivika duḥkhavighnagandharahiṣastvam dvayamarthānusandhānena saha sadivam vakṣā yāvachcharirapātām atraiva Śrīraṅge sukhamaśva .* (*ŚaraṇāgatiGadya* 18)

17. Pillai Lokācārya's *Aṣṭādaśa Rahasya*:

1. *Mumukṣuppaṭi* 2. *Tatvatrayam* 3. *Arthapañcakarn* 4.

Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam 5. *Arcirādi* 6. *Prameyaśekharam* 7. *Prapannaparīrāṇam*

8. *Sārasaṅgraham* 9. *Samsārasāmrāṇyam* 10. *Navaratnamālai* 11. *Navavidha-*

sambandham 12. *Yādṛccikkappaṭi* 13. *Parantapaṭi* 14. *Śrīyappatippaṭi* 15.

Tatvaśekharam 16. *Tanīdvayam* 17. *Tanīcaramam* and 18. *Tanīpraṇavam*.

18. *Mumukṣuppaṭi Sūtra* 115

19. *Ibid.* 122

20. *Ibid.* 186

21. *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam Sūtras* 23 & 24

22. *Ibid.* Maṇavālamuni commentary p.44 & 45

23. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 34

24. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 39

Bhūgata jalampole Antaryāmiṇam (*Antaryāmi* form is like water underneath the earth which one cannot see); *Āvaraṇa Jalampole Paratvam* (*para* form of god is like water above the world); *Pārkatāl pole Vyūham* (*Vyūha* form is like milky ocean); *Perukkāru Pole Vibhavaṅgal* (*Vibhava* form is like the rivers once over flowed); *Adile Teṅgina Maṭukkaḷ Pole Arcāvatāram* (*arcā* form is storage of water once over flowed which now spread into 108 *Divya Deśas*).

25. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 35

26. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 43

27. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 49

28. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 50

29. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 54

30. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 40 with Maṇavālamuni commentary p. 125

31. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 140 with Āyi commentary p.125

32. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 141

33. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 56 to 58 with Māmuni commentary p. 71 -72

34. *Ibid.* *Sūtra* 59

35. *Ibid. Sūtra* 60
36. *Ibid. Sūtra* 62
37. *Ibid. Sūtra* 63 *Lakṣmīantra* :
38. *Ibid Sūtra* 66
39. *Ibid. Sūtra* 68
40. *Ibid Sūtra* 71 with Māmuni Commentary p.154
41. *Ibid Sūtra* 134
42. *Ibid. Sūtra* 137
43. *Arthapañcaka* p.47
44. *Mumukṣuppaṭi Sūtra* 156 with Māmuni Commentary p.154
45. *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam Sūtra* 143
46. *Ibid. Sūtra* 142
47. *Ibid. Sūtras* 144 and 145
48. *Ibid. Sūtra* 145 with Māmuni Commentary p.127
49. *Ibid. Sūtra* 148
50. *Ibid. Sūtra* 149
*Nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyaḥ na medhayā na bahunā śrutena
yamevaiśa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ tasyaiśa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām.
(Muṇḍakopaniṣad and Kathopaniṣad 1.2.23)*
51. *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam Sūtra* 150
52. *Ibid. Sūtras* 427to 429
53. *Ibid. Sūtras* 433 to 436
54. *Ibid. Sūtra* 447
55. *Ibid. Sūtra* 462
56. *Ibid. Sūtra* 463
57. *Jñānam Anuṣṭānamivai Nanṅākave uṣaiyanāna
kuruvai Aṣaintakkāl - Mānilatīr Tenār Kamalam
Tirumāmakaḷ Koḷunan
Tāne Vaikuntam Tarum. (Upadeśaratnamālai 61)*

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Śaraṇāgati in Rāmānuja's Śrīvaiṣṇava Vāṭakalai Tradition (Viśiṣṭādvaita)

SHRI R. SARANGAN

Śrī Venkaṭanātha (1268-1369 AD), popularly known as also Vedāntadeśika, Nigamāntadeśika and Vedāntācārya, played an important role in safeguarding the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja's *Śrīvaiṣṇava* system following the principles of Vedāntadeśika is known as *Deśika sampradāya* or *Vāṭakalai sampradāya*.¹ His works in Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakṛta and Maṇipravāla languages illustrate his high proficiency in many languages. His works throw light on his mastery over *Nyāya*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Mīmāṃsā* and *Vedānta* philosophy.

Vedāntadeśika details the concept of *śaraṇāgati* in his number of *stotra* literatures in Sanskrit such as *Nyāsaviṃśati*, *Nyāsatilaka* and *Dayāśataka* though his casual references are found in almost all his *stotras*. He deals with the concept of *śaraṇāgati* in *Nikṣeparakṣā*, one of the three parts of a work known as *Rakṣāgrantha* in a logical manner quoting from all early literature viz. *Itihāsa*, *Purāṇa*, *Smṛtis* and so on. His works *Rahasyatrayasāra* and *Sārasāra* details with the nature of the Supreme Lord i.e. Nārāyaṇa, Śrī, and all other aspects the *jīvas* are concerned with. His *Abhayapradānasāra* delineates the features and concepts *saraṇāgati* aspect found in entire Rāmāyaṇa, in full length. His work in Tamil containing 11 hymns known as *Aṭaikkalappattu* is the essence of what he has explained in all his works.

Vedāntadeśika inherited this tradition of *Śaraṇāgati*, popularly known as '*Maḍaipalli Sampradāya*', from his maternal uncle Kiḍāmbi Appillār (grandson of Kiḍāmbi Āccān) and also from father Anantasūri (grand son of Anantālvān). Both Anantālvān and Kiḍāmbi Āccān are amongst the 74 *Simhāsanādhipatis* selected directly by Śrī Rāmānuja.

Saraṇāgati is also known as *Prapatti*, *Nyāsa*, *Bharanyāsa*, *Ātmanikṣepa*, *Tyāga* and *Bhara-samarpaṇa* as mentioned by *Vaiṣṇava*

ācāryas in their texts. This recognition of *Śaraṇāgati* by Rāmānuja as a direct pathway to God, accessible to all, irrespective of cast, creed, rank and sex explains the popularity commanded by *Śrīvaiṣṇavism*.

To attain liberation from the cycle of births and deaths (*saṁsāra*), one has to be first born as a human being. According to *Śrīvaiṣṇava* teachers, *Bakti* (loving devotion) and *Prapatti* (whole hearted surrender) are the two alternative means of liberation. The *Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas* right from the time of Nāthamuni have given preference to *Prapatti* and advocated it as the easier means to *mokṣa*. Vedāntadeśika also states that *śaraṇāgati* is best *dharma* to attain the results.²

Nārāyaṇa, consorted with Śrī, is *śaraṇya* (refuge) and he is endowed with a number of auspicious qualities such as *kāruṇya*, *saubhāgya*, *saṁsāra*, *vātsalya*, *kṛtājñatā*, *sarvajñatva*, *sarvaśaktitva*, *satyaśaṅkalpatva*, *paripūrṇatva* and *paramodāratva*³. However, accompaniment of Śrī is very important. Vedāntācārya presents in a beautiful way the nature and role of Śrī, the consort of Nārāyaṇa, in *Abhayapradānasāra*⁴ while explaining the episode of Kākāsura who physically afflicted Sītā. The nature of the Supreme Lord is to forgive even the worst *jīva* when he surrenders without any other alternative. However, the presence of Śrī in the form of Sītā and her support as *puruṣakāra* played the important role in protection of the crow.

The *Ācārya* defines and explains *śaraṇāgati* in his *Nyāsavimśati*:⁵

Nyāsaḥ prokto'tiriktam tapa iti kathitaḥ svadhvaraścāsyā kartā

Ahīrbudhnyo'pyanvavādidagaṇi diviśadāmuttamam guhyametat/

Sākṣānmokṣāya cāsau śruta iha tu mayā bādhaśaṅkā guṇādhye

Tanniṣṭho hyanyaniṣṭhān prabhuratiśayitum koṭikoṭyaṁśato'pili

'It has been said in the *Śrutis* that *Nyāsa* is a *Tapas* (penance or religious austerity) superior to all forms of *Tapas*. It has also been said that that he who performs *prapatti* becomes akin to one has performed a great *yāga* or sacrifice (oblation). Paramaśiva extolled it on the same lines. This *Nyāsa* is regarded by *Devas* as a top secret. That this *Nyāsa* is a direct and immediate means for *Mokṣa* also is laid down in the *Vedas*. Any doubt about *Prapatti* so highly extolled,

will be in vain. He who takes his stand on the *Prapatti* (done by him) is capable of excelling all those who resort to other means by several crores and crores.⁶

Vedāntācārya advocates *śaraṇāgati* with its five *aṅgas* and this *Ācārya*, while dealing with *Vibhīṣaṇa-śaraṇāgati* in *Abhayapradānasāra*, states that Vibhīṣaṇa attained the result of his *śaraṇāgati* as it consisted of all five *aṅgas*. They are:

1) *Ānukūlya saṅkalpa* - A resolve to do only things pleasing to the Lord as laid down by the *Śāstras*. Vibhīṣaṇa advised Rāvaṇa and other *rākṣasas* to hand over Sītā and helped Hanumān to elude and circumvent the dangers in the court of Rāvaṇa. These two acts were favourable to the Lord, hence it was *ānukūlya-saṅkalpa*.⁷

2) *Prātikūlya varjana* - Avoiding things that are displeasing to the Lord. Vibhīṣaṇa, when realized the nature of his association with his brother Rāvaṇa and other *Rākṣasas*, abandoned his wealth, properties, children and spouses.⁸ Vedāntācārya, while explaining the *Gītā śloka* in *Caramaślokādhikāra*, insists that a *mumukṣu* should avoid also the good *karmas* resulting in Svarga etc. for, they are barriers for the liberation of the *ātman* from the bondage and attain the highest abode of Lord.⁹

3) *Mahā viśvāsa* - Firm faith in Lord is the heart of *śaraṇāgati*. When Vibhīṣaṇa realized that Rāma alone was the savior he approached the place where Rāma resided, with firm faith of safety and security though it was actually a risky place for member from the enemy side i.e. from Rāvaṇa.¹⁰

4) *Goptr̥tva varaṇa* - Selection of the protector and praying for protection. Vibhīṣaṇa, even before meeting the Lord Rāma, informed the *vānara-senā* that he had surrendered to Rāma.¹¹ *Ananya-gatitva* (having no other resort) is entailed here. It is stated in *Kāmāsikāṣṭaka*, "If you protect me, there is no need of others. And also there is no need of others, (even) if you do not protect me" (*Tvayi rakṣati rakṣakaiḥ kim anyaiḥ/ Tvayi cārakṣati rakṣakaiḥ kim anyaiḥ*)¹².

5) *Ātmaniksepa-kārpanya* - Placing his burden at the feet of the Lord in all meekness and humility. Vibhīṣaṇa explained his pitiable condition in the Court of Rāvaṇa and his wish to be a servant of Rāma in hasty and pitiable voice.¹³

Vedāntācārya, while describing the result of Vibhīṣaṇa's *śaraṇāgati*, states that Vibhīṣaṇa's desire was not to become the ruler of Laṅkā but to render *kainkarya* (service) to Rāma¹⁴ and this *Ācārya*

emphasizes on the *kainkarya* to the Supreme One rather than other benefits. The five-fold *śaraṇāgati* is presented in a nutshell in *Aṭaikkalappattu* as-

*Umatāṭikaḷ aṭaikinren enru orukāl uraittavaraḷ
Amaiyaṁ inī enpavar pol āṇcal enaḷ karam vaittuḷ
Tamatu aṇaittuṁ avar tamakkum vaṇaṅkiyaṁ tāṇ viṇaṅkum
Amaiṇuṭaiya aruḷāḷar aṭiyinaiyai aṭaintene.*¹⁵

The same concept is presented in *Nyāsadaśaka* as:

*Nyasyāmyakiṇcanaḥ śrīman anukūlo'nyavarjitaḥ/
Viśvāsaprārthanāpūrvam āmarakṣābharam tvayi//*

‘Absolutely helpless and worthless as I am, Oh! Lord of Śrī, with the determination that I shall henceforth act in accordance with Your wishes and shall hereafter avoid and give up all transgressions from the rightful path as laid down by You, with the full and firm belief that *Nyāsa* at Your Feet will not fail to release me from the bondage of *saṁsāra*, I have laid down the burden of my protection as Your Feet, accompanied by a prayer (*prārthanā*) to you to become my Protector.’¹⁶

Vedāntācārya reminds everyone what is to be surrendered to the Lord at the time of *śaraṇāgati*. It is stated in *Nyāsadaśaka* –

*Aham madrakṣaṇabhāro madrakṣaṇaphalam tathā/
Na ma śrīpaterevetyātmānam nikṣipet budhaḥ//*

‘I do not belong to myself. The burden of my protection is not mine and the benefit accruing from such protection is equally not mine. They all belong only to Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Thus the wise man should lay down (consign) his self’.¹⁷

- 1) Surrendering himself to the Lord: He must give up the thought that he is the doer. He must give up the thought that any particular thing is his property. In effect he and every thing supposed to be belonging to him is in fact actually belonging to Lord.
- 2) To surrender to the Lord, the responsibility of protecting him and gracing *Mokṣa* to him.
- 3) Surrender to the Lord the fruit or gain arising from *śaraṇāgati* i.e. attaining *mokṣa*. Even the pleasure of enjoying the Lord in *Paramapada* is dedicated to the Lord only.

The concept of *śaraṇāgati* imparted to Arjuna by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavadgītā* verse ‘*Sarvadharmān...*’ gets special status in

Śrīvaiṣṇava followers as *Kṛṣṇa carama-śloka*. Vedāntadeśika, while commenting on this in his *Sārasāra*¹⁸, explicates every word and brings out the essence of *śaraṇāgati* and its procedure and means.

*Sarvadharmān parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja/
aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ||*

The implication of this verse as interpreted by *Vaiṣṇava Ācāyas* is that when an aspirant for *mokṣa* is incapable of observing the path of *bhakti-yoga* along with *karma-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga*, he should surrender himself to God. The all-compassionate and all powerful God will redeem him from all the sins standing as obstacles to his *mokṣa*. The aspirant does not have to grieve any more in regard to the attainment of the Goal. The same truth is emphasized in *Rāmāyaṇa* when incarnate God Rāma assures Vibhiṣaṇa with protection when the latter sought unconditional refuge of the former. If we go by the teachings of these sacred texts, *śaraṇāgati* as an easy and sure means of *mokṣa* is unquestionable.

Vedāntadeśika, the great *Mukta* (incarnation of the temple bell of Thirumalā) has not only preached but also followed *śaraṇāgati* as can be seen from the following *śloka* from *Nyāsadaśaka*:

*Svāmin Svāśeṣam svavaśam svabharatvena nirbharam/
Svadattasvadhīyā svārtham svasmin nyasyasi mām svayam//*
'My Lord of Śrī! You Yourself make me who is Your slave, and subject to Your control, perform *Nyāsa* with the help of the knowledge in that direction conferred upon me by You, for Your own benefit, and render me burdenless because the burden has been taken over by You.'¹⁹

Śaraṇāgati mentioned above involves training one's mind and intellect towards love of God. *Ācārya* plays the role as a facilitator. The most common procedure and *mantra* as taught are described in *Dayāśataka*:

*Tvaduyatūlikābhīramunā vṛṣaśailajuṣā
Sthiracaraśilpinaivā parikalpitacitradhīyaḥ/
Yatipatīyāmunaprabhṛtayaḥ prathayanti daye
Jagati hitam na nastivayi bharanyasanādadhikam//*²⁰

It means - The Lord Śrīnivāsa who painted all *tattvārthas* as beautiful pictures on the minds the great *Ācāryas* like Nāthamuni, Yāmūnācārya and Rāmānuja who in turn had spread these *tattvārthas* through *Guruparamparā*. The nectar of them is - "As we are

incapable of practicing *Bhakti-yoga* to attain mokṣa, there is no better method than *Bharanyāsa*.”

In conclusion, Vedāntadesika's *Vaṭakalai* Tradition of *śaraṇāgati* is the one which Lord Rāma Himself preached and followed. The whole world knows it as He Himself announced it through Śrī Vālmīki. *Guruparamparās* followed this and our *ācāryas* asking us to follow this *Śaraṇāgati* path for attaining *Mokṣa*.

Notes and References

- ¹ There are two schools in Rāmānuja's system viz *Deśikasampradāya* and *Lokācārya* or *Ten ācārya sampradāya*. Though both Pillai Lokācārya and Vedāntadesika propagated *Śrīvaiṣṇava sampradāya* of Rāmānuja, there are eighteen differences in their teachings.
- ² *Abhayapradānasāra*, p.144. in Cillarai Rahasyaṅkal (Part II) edited by V.N. Sriramadesikacarya, Tanjore, 1980.
- ³ *Sārasāra*, *Dvayādhikāra*, p.53. in Cillarai Rahasyaṅkal (Part II) edited by V.N. Sriramadesikacarya, Tanjore, 1980.
- ⁴ *Abhayapradānasāra* p.133.
- ⁵ *Nyāsaviṁśati*, 9. *Stotras of Sri Vedanta Desika*, Sri Vedanta Desika Sampradaya Sabha, Mumbai, 1994 (IV Revised edition).
- ⁶ *Nyāsaviṁśati*, 9, translated by D. Ramaswamy Aiyangar, Visiṭṭadvaita Pracharini Sabha, Madras, 1979.
- ⁷ *Abhayapradānasāra*, p.146.
- ⁸ *Abhayapradānasāra*, p.146.
- ⁹ *Sārasāra*, *Caramaślokaḍḍhikāra*, p. 104.
- ¹⁰ *Abhayapradānasāra*, p. 146.
- ¹¹ *Abhayapradānasāra*, p. 146.
- ¹² *Kāmāsikāṣṭakam*, 8.
- ¹³ *Abhayapradānasāra*, p. 147-48.
- ¹⁴ *Abhayapradānasāra*, p. 149.
- ¹⁵ *Āṭaikkalappattu*, 7.
- ¹⁶ *Nyāsadaśakam*, 2, translated by D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar, Wardha Publishing House, Madras, 1965.
- ¹⁷ *Nyāsadaśakam*, 1, translated by D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar.
- ¹⁸ *Sārasāra* in *Cillarai Rahasyaṅkal*, p. 81-115.
- ¹⁹ *Nyāsadaśakam*, 3, translated by D. Ramaswamy Ayyangar.
- ²⁰ *Dayasatakam*, 59.

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Concept of *Śaraṇāgati* in Śrī Nimbārka Tradition

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Śrī NimbārkaĀcārya is one of the important Vedāntic teachers in the history of Indian philosophy. He is considered as the founder of *Svābhāvīkabhedābheda* (the doctrine of natural difference and non-difference) School of Vedānta. He has written a commentary on *Brahmasūtras* of *Bādarāyaṇa*, which is known as *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha* (VPS) in which he has expounded his doctrine of *Svābhāvīkabhedābheda*. There is an uncertainty about the date of Nimbārka, because he has not left any historical evidence about his date. Traditional works, which provide account of life and activities of Nimbārka, are full of legends and myths and are of very late date. They are not historically reliable. Modern scholars, due to uncertainty of any historical evidence, are very much confused in deciding the date of Nimbārka. Some scholars think that Nimbārka lived after Rāmānuja and prior to Madhva. Some other scholars consider him to be post-Madhva, and still some place him even after Vallabha. Another group of scholars places him even after Bhāskara. Some consider him to be pre-Bhāskara. Some other scholars belonging to Nimbārka tradition believe that he is prior to Śaṅkara and even earlier to Gauḍapāda. These confusions are based on several works attributed to Nimbārka of which their authenticity is in question. Recent research on Nimbārka shows that *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha* (i.e. commentary on *Brahmasūtras*) is only the genuine work of Nimbārka and other works attributed to him are not his works and he flourished prior to Śaṅkara. There are several reasons to believe thus. Doctrines found in these works either differ from his view expounded in *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (VPS) or go against its teachings. Secondly, he refutes views of *Sāṅkhya*, *Jaina*, *Bauddha*, *Śaiva* and *Śākta*, but does not refute views of any Vedāntic Ācāryas, including Śaṅkara. He was unaware of views of Rāmānuja, Bhāskara and Śaṅkara. A comparative study of *Brahmasūtrabhāṣyas*

of Śaṅkara, Bhāskara and Rāmānuja, reveals that, these Ācāryas are familiar with doctrine of *Svābhāvika-bhedābheda*. Again, the terminologies and concepts of Vaiṣṇavism used in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* are more primitive in nature and he nowhere mentions later developed *Vaiṣṇava* concepts, such as *Prapatti*, *Gurūpasatti*, *Śaraṇāgati*, *Vaikuṇṭha* or *Goloka* in his *bhāṣya*. If we accept, *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha* as the only work of Nimbārka, then certainly, he is pre-Śaṅkara Vedāntin. He might have flourished in 6th century A.D., because he refutes highly developed form of *Śaiva* and *Śākta* schools, which were very popular and powerful in the Gupta and post-Gupta period,

Nimbārka and his followers accept three realities viz., *Brahman*, the soul and the matter.¹ Nimbārka, being a follower of *Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇava* tradition, identifies Upaniṣadic Absolute *Brahman* with Ramākānta Puruṣottama, because of his infinite, inconceivable, and innate nature and qualities and powers.² Nimbārka also calls him *Bhagavān Vāsudeva*.³ Śrīnivāsa in his commentary *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha* which is known as *Vedāntakaustubha* (VK) adds that Śrī Puruṣottama is on the one hand full of supernatural qualities and on the other hand devoid of all defects.⁴

Nimbārka's followers of later period identify Upaniṣadic *Brahman* with Śrīkṛṣṇa, Hari, Rādhākṛṣṇa, Keśava and Mādhava. The other two realities viz. the Soul and the Matter are not completely independent, but dependent on *Brahman* for their existence and activities. *Brahman* is the cause and the soul (*Jīva*) and the world (*jagat*) are his effects. According to Nimbārka, the relation between the *Brahman* on the one hand and the *Jīva* (the Soul) and the *Jagat* (the World) on the other hand is the relation of natural difference and non-difference. This relation is explained by Nimbārka citing several examples such as relation of cause and its effect, ocean and its waves, the sun and its luster, whole and parts.⁵ The soul and the material world are different from *Brahman*, because, they have real and distinct existence, but dependent on Him. They are non-different from *Brahman*, because they cannot exist apart from Him.

Liberation (*Mokṣa*) is the final goal of life. In fact according to Nimbārka, the entire created universe of souls and matter have a final goal to reach. The ultimate aim of the material world is limited

to the dissolution (*Pralaya*) in which the entire material world returns to *Brahman* and remains in Him as his power, without affecting Him.⁶ Liberation is the final goal of life of the individual soul. Nimbārka considers *Brahman* as the cause of bondage and liberation of the individual soul (*jīva*) in accordance with the *Śruti* texts. The real nature of the individual soul is concealed by the will of *Brahman* in accordance with the merits and demerits of the individual soul. When the merit and demerits are destroyed, the real nature of the *jīva* will be manifested.

According to Nimbārka, *mokṣa* or liberation means attaining the nature of *Brahman*⁷ and the attainment of one's own real and essential nature. Attaining the nature of *Brahman* means becoming similar to *Brahman*. When the soul has the immediate vision of *Brahman* (*Brahmasākṣātkāra*), attains similarity (*Śāmya*) with *Brahman*.⁸ Here, similarity means neither absolute identity nor absolute difference, but identity and difference. The *jīva* in liberated state attains the nature and attributes of *Brahman*. It becomes Existence, Consciousness and Bliss (*Saccidānandasvarūpa*), like *Brahman*. And in attributes also, like *Brahman* it is sinless, ego less, deathless etc.⁹ In this sense, *jīva* is non-different from *Brahman* in liberated state. But difference persists in this state of liberation also. It is not a merging in *Brahman*. Liberated soul is atomic in size, while *Brahman* is all-pervasive. The freed soul does not possess the power of creation, maintenance and destruction of the universe, while *Brahman* alone possesses this power. Secondly, while - attaining *Brahman*, the *jīva* also attains a full development of its own individuality. Nimbārka states that, the *jīva* having attained the *Parabrahman*, becomes manifest in its own form.¹⁰

Thus, liberation is not only attaining the nature of *Brahman* but also equally gaining of its own real self. Nimbārka believes only in *Videhamukti* — liberation after death and says that liberated soul transcends birth and death, and does not return to *Samsāra*, again.¹¹ However, followers of Nimbārka of later period emphasized loving personality of *Brahman* viz., Śrīkrṣṇa or Rādhākṣṇa and consider *Mokṣa* as the attainment of this loving personal God.

Nimbārka in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (VPS) mentions path of *Karma*, *Jñāna* (*Vidyā*) and *Upāsana* (meditation accompanied by devotion) as chief means of liberation. He does not mention either

prapatti (Self-surrender to God) or *Gurūpasatti* (self surrender to spiritual preceptor) as means of liberation. His followers of later period, accepted these two as independent means of liberation, Nimbārka considers path of knowledge as the right means of liberation. He states that liberation, which consists of attaining *Brahman*, is a result of rise of knowledge i.e. *Vidyā*.¹² Path of *karma* is meant to purify the mind of the spiritual aspirant. Vedic rituals, performed with the injunctions of the scriptures and good deeds purify the mind of the aspirant of liberation and thereby prepare the mind for the ultimate rise of knowledge, which leads to liberation.¹³ This knowledge is an outcome of life-long process of meditation on *Brahman*. Thus, meditation is the unique means of liberation for Nimbārka. It is the main cause in the rise of knowledge. *Upāsanā* is identified with *Dhyāna* (meditation) by Nimbārka.¹⁴ Meditation must be carried out with devotion. As a result, *Brahman* reveals Himself to the spiritual aspirants (*Upāsakas*). Nimbārka while commenting on *Brahmasūtra* '*api samārādhane pratyakṣānumānābhyām*'¹⁵ states that - *Brahman* is revealed in meditation accompanied by devotion.¹⁶ In this connection he quotes verses from *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* and the *Bhagavadgīta*. In *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* it is said, "Being purified by the grace of knowledge, one can see that invisible *Brahman* or self, through meditation i.e. thinking of it with a concentrated mind."¹⁷

In the *Gīta*, *Bhagavān* Kṛṣṇa says : "By undistracted devotion alone, I can be seen (in this form) and known in truth and be entered into."¹⁸ Śrīnivāsa, while commenting on this, clarifies the concept of meditation accompanied by devotion. He says, *Brahman* is revealed in perfect meditation (*nididhyāsanalakṣaṇa*) accompanied by devotion.¹⁹ Nimbārka again brings out the importance of meditation by stating that direct vision of Brahman (*Brahmadarśana*) results from the repetition of means (*Upāyas*) consisting of perfect meditation (prolonged and undistracted meditation) on Him, just as the sun, *agni* etc., are manifested through the repetition of the means and practice, by those who long for it.²⁰ It is very clear that, according to Nimbārka, *Bhakti* means kind of *Upāsanā* (meditation). Thus, chief means for the attainment of liberation is *Brahmopāsanā* consisting of meditation on *Brahman*. Nimbārka does not treat *Bhakti* or devotion as an independent means of liberation.

Nimbārka's followers speak of five means of liberation adding *Prapatti* and *gurūpasatti* to *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Upāsanā*. We do not find the terms, *prapatti* and *gurūpasatti* in entire *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* of Nimbārka. But he speaks of grace of God (*bhagavatprasāda*) and devotion to spiritual teacher (*gurubhakti*) in the process of liberation. Both, an intense desire for the grace of God and unflinching devotion to spiritual teacher, are important qualifications in order to undertake the study of *Brahmavidyā*.²¹

Nimbārka recognizes the importance of grace of God. As a *Vaiṣṇava Vedāntin*, he firmly believes that, rise of knowledge (*Vidyā*) and final liberation is also due to grace of God. While describing the final departure of the Knower (*Vidvān*), he states, "When the knower is blessed by the *Brahman* (i.e. object to be known), who is pleased by his (Knower's) power of knowledge and by the application of the remembrance of the path, which is supplementary part of *Vidyā*, the forepart of his heart becomes lighted by the supreme Lord (*paramēśvara*) and he departs through the door revealed by the God."²²

Nimbārka being a follower of Upaniṣadic tradition gives importance to qualified spiritual teacher to gain knowledge of *Brahman*. Wholehearted devotion to spiritual preceptor is essential to follow the path of *Brahman*. The seeker of knowledge of *Brahman*, with the help of qualified preceptor only, is able to follow the Vedantic method of listening, reflecting and meditating which will lead him to the realization of the ultimate goal.²³ These concepts of grace of God and devotion to spiritual preceptor found in *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha* are developed into important concepts of self-surrender (*Prapatti*) and self-surrender to Spiritual teacher (*Gurūpasatti*) by Nimbarka's followers.

Prapatti and *gurūpasatti* are natural development in the path of *Bhakti*. Nimbārkites have developed a full-fledged doctrine of *Bhaktimārga*. The present day Nimbārka sect is a *Bhakti* dominated religious group. Nimbārka's followers are well-known for Rādhākṛṣṇa worship, though Nimbārka nowhere mentions Rādhākṛṣṇa in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. The work known as *Daśaśloki* (DS), also called *Vedāntakāmadhenu* or *Siddhāntaratna* (ascribed to Nimbārka), which occupies prominent place in the Nimbārka tradition, advocates special kind of devotion consisting of

love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, i.e. *premaviśeṣalakṣaṇā bhakti*, which is considered as highest kind of devotion. According to *Daśaśloki*, highest *Brahman* is the Lord Kṛṣṇa attended by Rādhā, who is to be meditated on, at all times, (DS, 4-5). There is no other means to liberation except the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa (DS,8). He extends his grace to all those who have no qualification other than the awareness of their own helplessness. Through His grace only, *Bhakti* consisting of special kind of love for Him is generated.²⁴

In another verse of the same text, it is said, "We meditate on the supreme *Brahman* viz., Kṛṣṇa or Hari, who has eyes like the lotus who naturally has destroyed all defects, who is the store of all auspicious qualities and whose body is represented by *Vyūha*."²⁵

It considers devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa as the only means to liberation. It emphasizes on a personal relation of love and friendship between God and the devotee. Puruṣottama in his *Vedāntaratnamāñjūṣā* (pp. 971 115, 118, 126-128) *Puruṣottamaprasāda* — *Vaiṣṇava* in *Śrutyantakalpavalli* (p. 27) and *Giridharaprapanna* in *Laghumañjūṣā* (p. 33-37) speak of various forms of *Bhakti* such as *Parābhakti*, *aparābhakti* and *Sādhana-rūpikābhakti*.

Daśaśloki, contains the concept of *Prapatti*.²⁶ Its developed form is seen in *Prapannakalpavalli*. The doctrine of *Gurūpasatti* in its developed form is found in *Mantrarāhasyaśodaśi*. We have already noted that these concepts are not found either in *Vedāntapārijātasaurabha* of Nimbārka or *Vedāntakaustubha* of Śrīnivāsa. Influence of *Viśiṣṭādvaita* is clearly seen, in the development of these concepts on Nimbārka's. R.G. Bhandarkar rightly pointed out that idea of *Prapatti* and *gurūpasatti* as found in *Prapannakalpavalli* and *Mantrarāhasyaśodaśi*, seems to be influenced by the doctrines well developed in the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* school of Rāmānuja, especially the *Tenkalai* tradition.²⁷

Prapannakalpavalli teaches *prapatti* as a unique means of liberation. The doctrinal gist of it may be summarized in this way: "*Prapatti* means complete self surrender to God. In this one has to give up his egoity and completely dependent on God alone in every respect. *Prapatti* really consists in the complete dependence of the devotee on the Lord for everything, at every moment and surrendering oneself completely to the mercy of God."²⁸ The follower of path of *prapatti* must consider God as a father, mother, friend,

master, as knowledge, wealth and everything²⁹ and serve Him as a son, serves his father, child serves his mother, a friend serves his friend and servant serves his master.³⁰ A spiritual aspirant who longs for liberation through path of self-surrender must give up one's narrow feelings of individuality or an independent, self-sufficient being.³¹ To emphasize, complete self-surrender, it is said that, follower of this path must give up all other kinds of *sādhana*s.³² Adaptation of different kinds of *Sādhana* may divert the mind of the devotee and generate confusion and doubt in his mind. He must realize one's own limitations and helplessness, and approach guru for guidance.³³ The devotee of this path must not have other interest than the attainment of God³⁴ and take refuge in Him with his whole mind and body.³⁵ If devotee surrenders himself to God absolutely, then, God is ever gracious to him and protects him at all times from all harms and difficulties.³⁶ God regards him as his special ward and dear friend and never abandons him.³⁷ Not only this, God Himself leads him to liberation, namely attainment of himself.³⁸

This path of *Prapatti* or self surrender cannot be take in the sense of complete inactivity on the part of devotee. The devotee has to follow certain ethical disciplines in addition to self-surrender to God. Love of God means love for mankind, because God resides in every being and in everything. Therefore, *Prapannakalpavalli* specifically mentions six factors, which constitute self-surrender viz. (1) good will towards all beings (*ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ*), (2) no ill-will towards any other being (*prātikūlyasya varjanam*), (3) unflinching faith in God as the protector (*rakṣiṣyatīti Viśvāsaḥ*), (4) acceptance of the God as the sole Savior (*goptrtvavarāṇam*), (5) feeling of helplessness without protection of the God and (6) Complete self-surrender (*ātmanikṣepaḥ*).³⁹

Thus, self-surrender to God means ceaseless effort to follow the right path. *Gurūpasatti* is also one of the means of liberation according to Nimbārkaiteś, which is found in its developed form in *mantrarāhasyaśoḍaśī*. In this way, Nimbārkaiteś speak of five means of liberation. They all lead to liberation, either separately or jointly. Any one can follow these paths, irrespective of caste, creed and sex, according to their capacities and inclinations. Those who are confident of attaining liberation by their own efforts; can follow the path of action, knowledge and meditation. Those who are not able

to follow the paths can choose the path of self-surrender to God or self-surrender to the spiritual preceptor.

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- 1 *Tatvam tāvat trividham – cū, acū, brahmabhedāt. Vedāntakaustubha* -VK. I.I.1
- 2 *Anantācintyasvābhāvikaḡaḡaśaktyādibhiḡ bhṛatnamo ramākāntaḡa puruṣottamaḡa brahmaśabdābhīdheyah* -VPS. I.I.1.
- 3 *tasmātsarvataḡa sarvācintyaśaktiviśvajanmādihetuḡa vedaikapramāṇa-gamyah sarvabhinnābhinnino bhagavān vāsudevah* - VPS I.I.4
- 4 *Brahmādiśabdābhīdheyah sarvajñah svābhāvikaścintyānanta yāvadātmavṛttiḡaḡaśaktyādyāśrayo brahmarudrendraprakṛtiparamāṇukālakarmasvabhāvadiniyantā doṣāsprṣtasimā cidacū svābhāvika-bhedābhīdāśrayo bhagavān vāsudevah Śri puruṣottamaḡa. - VK.I .I.1.*
- 5 *VPS.II.I.13, II.III. 4, 28, 42).*
- 6 *VPS.II.I.8-9*
- 7 *brahmabhāvāpanno bhavati* VPS III.III.30
- 8 *Brahmasākṣātkārāddhetoh tena saha sāmyam yāti/ VPS. III. II, 26.*
- 9 *VPS. IV. IV, 1-9.*
- 10 *VPS.IV.IV.1.*
- 11 *VPS. IV. IV. 22.*
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- 13 *Brahmanidvārthino yadyapi karmabhirantaḡa karmasuddhidvārā vidyāsyāt. VK. III.IV.27.*
- 14 *VPS.IV.1.8.*
- 15 *VPS. III.II.24.*
- 16 *Bhaktiyoge dhyānetu vyajyate brahma VPS. III. II. 24.*
- 17 *jñānaprasādena viśuddha satvaḡa tatastutam paśyati niṣphalam dhyāyamānaḡa - Mundakaopaniṣad III.I. 8.*
- 18 *bhaktiā tvananyaya śakyah āhamevaḡa vidhorjuna/ jnyātum draṣṭum ca tauvena praveṣṭum ca parantapa. - Gita XI-54.*
- 19 *. Samrādhane samyagārādhane nididhyāsanalakṣaṇe bhaktiyoge brahma vyaktam bhavati/ - VK. III. II. 24*
- 20 *Sūryāgnyādīnām yatha tadarthikṛta sādhanābhīyāsāt āvirbhāvaḡa tadvat brahmaṇo'pyavaiśeṣyam brahmaprakāśo bhavati samrādhanalakṣaṇāt upāyād brahmadarṣanam bhavatiṭyarthah. - VPS. III. II. 25.*
- 21 *Bhagavatprasādepsunā taddarśaneccḡalampatena ācāryaikadevena*

śrīgurubhaktiekahardena mumukṣuṇā - VPS.I.I.1

- 22 *Vidyāsamarthyāi taccheṣagatyānusrūyogācca prasannena vedyena
anugrṛhāt yadā bhavati tatastasyaiko hr̥dayamagrajvalanam bhavati
tada paramēśvaraprakāśitadvārah tam vidivā vidwan tathā
niṣkrāmati. VPS. IV.II.16.*

- 23 (VPS. I.I.1; IV. I.1; VK.I.I.1)

- 24 *krpāsya dainyādiyuji prajāyate
yathābhavet premaviśeṣalakṣaṇā/
bhaktirhi ananyādhipatermahātmanah
sācotamā sādhanarūpikā parā// - DS. 9*

- 25 *svabhāvatopāstasamastadoṣam
aśeṣakalyāṇa guṇaika-rāsim/
vyūhāgnim brahma param varenyam
dhyāyema Kṛṣṇam kamalekṣaṇam harim// - DS. 4*

- 26 DS.8-9.

- 27 Bhandārkar R.G. p. 65-66.

- 28 PK.4

- 29 PK.6-8

- 30 PK. 9.

- 31 PK. 19

- 32 PK.24.

- 33 PK.43.

- 34 PK.24.

- 35 PK.19.

- 36 PK. 12-14.

- 37 PK, 15.

- 38 PK. 22-23.

- 39 *Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpah prāṇikūlyasya varjanam/
rakṣiṣyati viśvāsaḥ gopīrtva varaṇam tathā/
ātmanikṣepa kārpaṇye Śaḍvidhā śaraṇāgatih/ PK. 1041.*

Śaraṇāgati in the Theistic Philosophy of Śrī Madhva

DR. S.K. BHAVANI

It should be clearly understood that *Śaraṇāgati* which means absolute surrender to God is relevant only to a Theistic Philosophy and has no place or justification in a monistic one. *Śaraṇāgati* is intended for the riddance of bondage of souls in *Samsāra*. Such bondage and release from it must both be real states of the individual. This is confirmed by the *Upaniṣads*: - *Samśāra mokṣa sthītibandha hetuḥ*¹ As Śaṅkara puts it, the state of bondage and release of the *Ātman* are both equally real and true for a Theist and a Realist: *Ātmano bandhmuktāvasthe paramārthataḥ eva vastubhūte sarveṣāṃ dvāitavādinām. Advaitinām punaḥ avasthā-bhedavatvānupapatteḥ*² For a Monist, two different states cannot both be real for the same person.

The Theist slogan is: *Bandhako bhavapāśena bhavapāśacca mocakaḥ, Kaivalyadaḥ param Brahma Viṣṇureva Sanātanaḥ* (Śrīdhara on *Bhāgavatamahāpurāṇam*). The *Śvet;avatara Upaniṣad* text quoted above reflects the opinion of the *Brahmasūtra* iii, 2, 5: *Parābhidyānāttu tirohṛtam tato hyasya bandhaviparyayau*, in which both bondage and release of souls are stated to be dependent on God's will, while according to monism of Śaṅkara the incidence of bondage is the outcome of *Avidyā* or *Māyā* and freedom from bondage is the outcome of true knowledge of the Self alone. The slogan of Theism is *Dāso'ham*, while that of Monism is *So'ham*. No doubt, Śaṅkara's Monism has a *Saguṇabrahman*, which is regarded as Omniscient as described in the *Upaniṣads*: *Yah sarvajñaḥ sarvavītyasya jñānamayam tapaḥ*³ but, Doctors of *Advaita* tell us that such Omniscience of God itself presupposes His being exposed to *Avidyā*, albeit falsely: *Sarvajñatvamapi avidyāvatvam ākṣipati na tu pratikṣipati (Ānandabodha)*.

It is against this background that we have to consider the indispensability of *Śaraṇāgati* in a Theism and a *Vedānta* Theism at that. Among the theistic systems of *Vedānta* the Rāmānuja school had made a distinctive contribution of its own to the doctrine of

Śaraṇāgati as a *laghu-upāya* of obtaining release as against the tougher one based on religious *Bhaktiyoga* nourished by the discipline of *Śravaṇa*, *Manana* and *Nidhidhyāsana* of *Śāstras* to be followed by the direct vision of the Supreme (*Draṣṭavyaḥ*) The Rāmānuja school has also developed a via-media of *Prapatti* (surrender) through a mediator by way of *Samāśrayaṇa* where the Guru plays a role of a confessor in Catholicism. The *Markaṭanyāya* and the *Mārjāranāya* represent two aspects of the doctrine of *Śaraṇāgati* where *Guru* takes the place of mediator on one of these two ways of approach. The term *Bharanyāsa* explains the vicarious role of the mediator on behalf of the devotee.

There can be no two opinions on the point that the doctrine of *Śaraṇāgati* has its roots in *Bhakti* whose root meaning is *Sevā* (service), humility, self abnegation and surrender. Surrender implies a master and servant relation or a *Māhātmyajñāna* of the person to whom one surrenders in implicit trust of being saved. Absolute and unquestioning trust in a Savior is common to both the *Prapatti* and *Bhakti-mārga*, which is, defined as *Rakṣisyati it viśvāsaḥ* in *Prapatti*. The absolute faith in the *Rakṣaka* necessarily presupposes a good deal of trust, which has to depend on the *Māhātmyajñāna* of the *Rakṣaka*. Though the terminology of *Prapatti* is not used in the *Dvaita* view, in substance it presupposes the same amount of faith and conviction and trust as Madhva puts it in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣyam* defining an *Uttamādhikāri* in explaining the nature of *Atha* as *adhikārānantaryam*. Such *adhikāra* or fitness for *brahmajijñāsā* is of three kinds: *Manda*, *Madhyama* and *Uttama*. The *Uttamādhikāri* is one who is fully convinced of the truth: *Ā brahma stamba paryantam asāram cāpyanīyakam vijñāya jātavairāgyaḥ Viṣṇupādaikasamśrayaḥ sa Uttamādhikāri syāt*. This is substantially the same as:

Ananyāścintayanto mām ye janāḥ paryupāsate.

*teṣām nityābhiyuktānām yogakṣemam vahāmyaham.*⁴

'Ananya' meaning *tadekaśaraṇatvam* as the other term '*Ananyādhipati*' signifies in describing the released soul as emphasized by Madhvācārya. Such a meaning will alone be in keeping with the spirit and letter of the *Sūtra*: *Jagad Vyāpāravarjam* in describing the *muktajīva* in *Brahmasūtra* IV.4.17 after describing the *muktajīva* as '*Ananyādhipati*'. A modicum of faith in the capacity of *Rakṣaka* is necessary even for *Prapatti* to be directed towards the

right person. This ultimately depends on some amount of *Māhātmyajñāna* of the person to whom *Prapatti* is made. This is the underlying principle between the Upaniṣadic statement *Tamevam vidvān amṛta iha bhavati* where the term *evam vidvān* stands for the *Māhātmyajñāna* of the Lord. The definition of *Bhakti* given in Madhva's system – *Māhātmajñānapūrvastu sudṛḍhaḥ. Sarvato adhikaḥ sneho Bhaktiriti proktaḥ*⁵ includes all the ingredients. It would take volumes to describe the true nature of God's *Māhātmya*. Madhva briefly puts it as *Sarvatrā khila sacchaktiḥ svatantra aśeṣa darśanaḥ. Nityātādṛśa ciccetya yantā iṣṭo no Ramāpatih. (Tattvodyota)*

The term 'Svatantra' is defined as *Svarūpa pramīti pravṛtīrūpa sattātraividhye prāṇapekṣam*, that which is not dependent on any other for its being, universal consciousness and unimpeded functioning. All finite reality is dependent on infinite one for their being, becoming and functioning, be they *jīvas* or *jaḍas*. As the one and only *svatantra Tattva*, the Supreme Being is naturally the inner energizing principle of all else (*Vīśvāntaryāmi*) a term used in the *Brahmasūtras* summing the ideas in terms of *Antaryāmi*: *Antaryāmi adhidaivādiṣu Taddharmavyapadesāt*⁶ There can be no being dearer to one than such a one, the innermost one of all, as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* tells us in I.4.8 – *Tadetat preyaḥ putrāt preyo anyasmāt sarvasmāt, antaratarah ya ātmā* – which is aptly paraphrased by the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* as follows:

*Prāṇa buddhi manaḥ svātma dehāpatya dhanādayaḥ.
Yat samparkāt priyā āsan tataḥ ko nu aparah priyaḥ?*⁷

It is obvious then that it is only so long as the Lord dwells in one's own self, body, wife and children and people become dear to us as stressed by Yājñavalkya too:

*Na vā are patyuh kāmāya patih priyo bhavati; Na vā are jāyāyai kāmāya jāyā priyā bhavati ātmanastu kāmāya sarvaṁ priyam bhavati.*⁸ The term *Ātman* here refers to *Paramātman*, the *Antaryāmi*.

The succinct definition of *Bhakti* in terms of *Māhātmyajñāna-pūrvaka sudṛḍhaḥ snehaḥ* has been explained by Jayatīrtha as the steady unwavering and continuous flow of deep attachment to God, impregnable by any amount of impediments (as in the case of Prahlāda) and transcending the love for one's own self,

kith and kin and other cherished belongings and fortified by a firm conviction of the transcendental majesty and greatness of God as the abode of all perfection and free from all blemishes and complete metaphysical dependence of all finite reality on Him. This expanded definition of Bhakti is classical one. To quote the original from his *Nyāyasudhā*: - “*Parameśvara bhaktirnāma niravadhika anantānavadya kalyāṇaguṇatva jñānapūrvakaḥ svātmātmīya samasta vastubhyo anantaguṇādhikaḥ tailadhārāvāt nirantara premapravāhaḥ*”⁹. It is all absorbing concentration of mind and soul in God in *Bhakti* that is described in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as the state of mind of the *sthītaprajña*: *Yā niśā sarvabhūtānām yasyām jāgarti samyamī*, according to Jayatirtha Raghavendrathirtha compares it to the Upaniṣadic statement:

*yatra nānyat paśyati nānyat śṛṇoti nānyat vijānāti sa bhūmā*¹⁰

The ancient Tamil *Śaiva* literature of the Nāyanmārs and the hymns of the Āḷvārs refer to themselves as *Aḍiyārs* as also the *Vīraśaivas* who use the term *Basavana Āḷ*. *Āḷ* and *aḍiyen* mean at the service of God. It is a mark of *Naicyānusandhāna* in Śrivaishṇava terminology. The famous *Tirukkuraḷ* of the second century Tamil saint Tiruvalluvar emphasizes *śaraṇāgati* in the opening section itself (I.1.10) *Piravip peruṇkaḍal ninduvar nindār iraivanāḍi śerādār*. (It is impossible to swim across the ocean of birth and death unless one resorts to the feet of the Lord). The famous Karnataka saint Purandara Dāsa signifies the importance of *Śaraṇāgati* in one of his songs – *Muddu Śrī Purandara viṭṭhala ninnadiyamele biddukonḍiruva yemage samsāra bhayaveke?* (Oh! Sweet Purandara Vithala! We who hold fast to your feet, where is the fear of *Samsāra* for us).

It remains to be noted that Rāmānuja and Madhva have interpreted the *Brahmasūtra* as treatise on *Vedānta* theism, which begins with *Brahmajijñāsā* and ends with realization. It is not without significance that the *sūtras* conclude with debarring the realized souls from exercising the prerogative of *Brahman* as *Jagajjanmādikāraṇa* and making them abide in *Brahman* for ever afterwards without having to return to transmigration – *Anāvṛtṭiḥ śabdāt anāvṛtṭiḥ śabdāt*. Also cf.:

Ya enān Brahma gamayati eṣa devapatho Brāhmapathah.

*Etena pratipadyamānā imam mānavam āvartam nāvartante*¹¹

And, it also deserves to be mentioned that, Madhva is the only *Bhāṣyakāra* on the *Brahmasūtra* who has devoted and named one entire *pāda* of the *Sādhanaādhyāya* to the theme of *Bhakti*. In his opinion *Bhakti* is not only a means to an end i.e. *Mokṣa*, but continues in *Mokṣa* as well:

*Bhaktiyā jñānam tato bhaktiḥ tato dṛṣṭiḥ tataśca sā
Tato muktiḥ tato bhaktiḥ saiva syāt sukhārūpiṇi.*¹²

Is this not the height of *Śaraṇāgati*?

Notes and References

- ¹ *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* VI.16.
- ² Śaṅkara's *Gītā Bhāṣya* XII, 2.
- ³ *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* I.9
- ⁴ B.G. IX- 22
- ⁵ *Mahabharata Tatparya Nirṇaya* 1-86
- ⁶ *Brahmasūtra* I.2.18
- ⁷ *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* X.23.27
- ⁸ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* II. 4.5
- ⁹ *Nyāyasudhā* I.1.17
- ¹⁰ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VII. 24.1
- ¹¹ *Chāndogya. Upaniṣad* IV.15.5
- ¹² *AnuVyākhyāna* III.4. 5-6

The Nature Scope and Significance of *Śaraṇāgati* :

A Vallabha Approach

SHRI SHYAMMANOHAR GOSWAMY

1. '*Śaraṇāgati*', '*Prapatti*', '*Āśraya*', '*Gati*' and '*Śaraṇa*' all are synonymous terms.

2. The concept of *Śaraṇāgati* is there in Upaniṣads¹ *BhagavadGītā*² and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*³ also.

3. *Brhadaranyakopaniṣad*⁴ and *Gītā*⁵ both classify individual souls as having either divine or demonic inclinations. *Gītā*⁶ says that the demonic souls never surrender themselves to The Supreme Soul . Therefore *Śaraṇāgati* is a divine response of some individuals who belong to the class that have the divine inclination; and not demonic inclination, for The Supreme Soul.

4. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*⁷ says that The Lord has propagated three paths viz. that of action, knowledge and devotion for the spiritual welfare of the souls having divine inclination. Therefore, in all the paths the response of *Śaraṇāgati* is a befitting qualification of any individual soul.

5. Mahāprabhu Śrī Vallabhācārya has made further sub-classification of the souls that have divine inclination into *Puṣṭi* and *Maryādā*. Thus, the action knowledge or devotion can also be classified in said manner of *Puṣṭi* or *Maryādā*. So *Śaraṇāgati* too is considered to be of such two natures i.e. *Maryādā* and *Puṣṭi*.

6. *Śaraṇāgati* for the sake of gaining some benefit of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* or *Mokṣa*, is a *Śaraṇāgati* of *Maryādā* path. While in the path of *Puṣṭi* a soul surrenders himself/herself either to gain. The Lord Himself or His devotion. That is all.

7. Both sorts of souls i.e. Maryādā and Puṣṭi can be further thought -"as being either *Susādhana* 1 , well versed in scriptural virtues or *Nissādhana* 2, incompetent or inept or *Duṣṭasādhana* 3 , ill versed or having vicious life-style. All the three types of souls can take refuge of God. None is disqualified for surrendering himself/herself before God. Neither cast nor gender nor age nor virtuous/vicious life-style, nor even Knowledge or devotion are demanded as a necessary qualification for *Śaraṇāgati*. It is an open door of the divine palace, through which either God Himself can come out and receive the visitor, or any soul can enter and receive His grace.

8. The only two prerequisites for such *Śaraṇāgati* is awareness of the greatness of The Lord and humbleness on the part of the seeker.

9. Mahāprabhu, his both sons the elder Sri Gopīnāthaji and the younger Sri Viṭṭhalnāthaji have discussed the nature, scope, different modes and efficacy of *Śaraṇāgati*, in their respective granthas *Bālabodha* (Ma. Pra.), *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* (Ma. Pra.), *Navaratna* (Ma. Pra.), *Vivekadhairyāśraya* (Ma. Pra.), *Kṛṣṇāśraya* (Ma. Pra.), *Pañcapadyāni* (Ma. Pra.) , *Sevāphala* (Ma. Pra.), *Pañcaśloki* (Ma. Pra.), *Sāadhanadīpikā* (Ma. Pra.) and, *Nyāsadeśavivarana* (Ma. Pra.)

10. Before introducing the summarized categories of the different types of *Śaraṇāgati*, based on these works it is necessary to relate the sub-divisions of puṣṭi-souls, as it is described in short work called '*Puṣṭi-pravāha-maryādā*'. Mahāprabhu has shown in this work that Puṣṭi souls have basic two division :śuddha (pure) and miśra (mixed). There, in second type, are more sub-varieties called, *Pravāhapuṣṭi*1 *Maryādāpuṣṭi*2 and *Puṣṭi-puṣṭi*3. About śuddha category he says that they are rare and the rarity is due to the fact that before a soul starts seeking God, it is He who takes the initiative in seeking and finding that soul. About the mixed types of the souls, Mahāprabhu says that *Puṣṭi-pravāha* souls are more

inclined to the activity concerning devotion than the understanding of the true nature of the Lord or His divine scriptures, qualities and workings. “*Maryādā-Puṣṭi* Souls are not merely activity-oriented but they possess inclination for both the activity as well as understanding. But the *Puṣṭi-puṣṭi* souls participates totally with his body, mind and heart in devotion of God.

11 . Thus, broadly speaking, śaraṇāgati can be classified in very similar way as Rāmānuja Sect accepts it:

1. *Upāyāvalambana* (in model of monkey infant)
2. *Upeyāvalambana* (in model of kitten and cat)

The first type is related to devotion and second type is an independent mean from all other scriptural requirements of means.

1. As the sub varieties of First type can be traced as (a) *Śaraṇāgati* for acquiring devotional sentiment, (b) *Śaraṇāgati* as a part of devotion (c) *Śaraṇāgati* subsisting on devotional sentiment. *Śaraṇāgati* of type (a) is trait of *Maryādā-puṣṭi* soul. *Śaraṇāgati* of (b) type is trait of *Pravāha-puṣṭi* soul. *Śaraṇāgati* of type (c) is trait of *Puṣṭi-puṣṭi* soul. These are all the *Upāyāvalambana* types of *Śaraṇāgati*.

2. The second i.e. *Upāyāvalambana* type *Śaraṇāgati* has again two varieties: ““*Śaraṇāgati* as a substitute of devotion *Śaraṇāgati*, which is an alternative to devotional sentiment. Here division (a) occurs with either *Maryādā-puṣṭi* or *Pravāha-puṣṭi* souls. But if The Lord by His sweet and absolutely free will or mercy drags any soul toward Himself, then *Śaraṇāgati* is treated by Him as an alternative to devotional sentiment, true knowledge and other such virtues. Such case should be known as a case of *Suddha puṣṭi*.

12. At the end of *Gītā* discourse what The Lord said as an assurance to Arjuna that should not be treated as *Upāyāvalambana* but a pure case of *Upeyāvalambana*. This can happen either with *Maryāda* soul or with *Puṣṭi* soul too. The difference lies in the ultimate reward that God gives to surrendered soul. If liberation rewarded without the possibility of devotion, then the case is of *Maryādā Upeyāvalambana*. And if the devotion is rewarded with/without liberation then the case is of *Śuddha-Puṣṭi Upeyāvalambana*, the summum bonum grace of The Divinity!

In case of such a rare achievement of Śaraṇāgati, no soul can ever go astray. Because such a soul is fixed in Godly embracement by sheer dint of his sweet divine will!

Notes and References

1. *Śvetāśvatara upaniṣad* 6/18
2. *Gītā* 4/11; 7/14, 15/4, 18/62-66
3. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 11/2/42, 11/12/14
4. *Brhadaranyakopanīṣad* 1/3/1
5. *Gītā* 16/6-20
6. *Gītā* 7/15
7. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 11/20/6

The Concept of *Śaraṇāgati* in *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*

DR. SATYANARAYANA DASA

As in other *Vaiṣṇava* schools, *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism* accepts the existence of a Supreme God with personal features. He is identified as Lord Kṛṣṇa. The living entities, both in the material creation as well as in the spiritual world, are subservient to the Lord, being his *aṁśas*, or parts, as indicated in *Bhagavad-Gītā*: “The eternal living entities within this material world are My parts”.¹

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*² it is explained that the living entities in the material world are under the influence of ignorance, which is beginningless. In his *Bhakti-sandarbhā* (*Anuccheda* 1)³ Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī has elaborated on this point, explaining that although the living entities are conscious by nature, their knowledge about their own intrinsic nature is covered by the Lord’s external energy, called *māyā*. The reason why the living entities are covered is because they are plagued with the defect of indifference to the Lord, which is in the form of beginningless ignorance about Him. Because of this defect, *māyā* awards the living entities with material bodies. The living entities identify with their material bodies and thus suffer the tribulations of material miseries.

The scriptures recommend that one can mitigate material miseries by *śaraṇam*, or the process of taking shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord. Uddhava indicates this in the following verse:

“Oh Lord, for those whose hearts are scorched by the threefold miseries on the blazing path of material existence, I see no other refuge than the cooling shade of Your lotus feet, which are like an umbrella that emits a delightful shower of nectar.”⁴

Lord Kṛṣṇa also reiterated the same point in *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

“This divine potency of Mine, consisting of the three *guṇas*, or constituent qualities of nature, is very difficult to cross over. Those who surrender unto Me alone can cross beyond this *māyā*.”⁵

While concluding His teachings, Lord Kṛṣṇa directly instructed Arjuna to take shelter of Him:

“Abandon all varieties of *dharma* and take exclusive shelter of Me. I will deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.”⁶

Therefore, every Vaiṣṇava School recommends taking shelter of the Lord.

B) Definition

The word *Śaraṇam* comes from the verbal root *śr*, ‘to cut or break,’ to which the suffix *lyuṭ* is applied in an instrumental sense (i.e., taking shelter means, ‘that by which one is cut free’). According to the *Śabda-kalpadrūma* dictionary, the act of taking shelter is called *śaraṇam* because it cuts away a person’s miseries.⁷ This meaning is consistent with the verses cited above. The word *śaraṇāgati* means acceptance of *śaraṇam*, or the shelter of the Lord. It is also called *śaraṇāpatti* or *prapatti*. In his *Durgama-saṅgamaṇi* commentary on *Bhakti-rasāmṛta Sindhu* Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, has explained that *śaraṇāgati* conveys two meanings. The first is that a surrendered soul has accepted the Lord as his sole protector, and the second is that he or she has attained the refuge of the Lord.⁸

In *Hari-Bhakti-Vilāsa* Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī defines *śaraṇāpatti* as follows:

“The learned have defined *śaraṇāpatti* as the act of taking refuge exclusively in ŚrīKṛṣṇa by one’s speech, mind and body.”⁹

In his commentary on this verse, Sanātana Gosvāmī writes that to take shelter by speech means to pronounce the words, “I belong to You, O Lord”. To take shelter by the mind means to think, “I belong only to Him (the Lord)”, and to take shelter by the body means to reside in the Lord’s holy places, such as Vṛndāvana.

In *Bhakti-Sandarbhā*, *Anuccheda* 235, Jīva Gosvāmī explains that bhakti has two divisions namely *vaidhī* and *rāgānugā*. Then in *Anuccheda* 236 he mentions eleven types of *vaidhī-bhakti*, of which the first is *śaraṇāpatti*. This is followed by *śrī-gurvādi-sat-sevā*,

śravaṇam, kīrtanam, smaraṇam, pāda-sevanam, arcanam, vandanam, dāsyam, sakhyam and *ātma-nivedanam*. He says that there are two types of people who resort to the Lord as their exclusive refuge. The first one is a person who is troubled by fear of material existence, which is perpetuated by the six enemies of lust, greed, anger, delusion, pride and envy, and finds no shelter other than the feet of the Lord. The other is desirous of devotion to the Lord yet is hampered by his or her indifference to the Lord. Such a person also abandons all other endeavors and resorts to the Lord's shelter alone.

There are two reasons why this shelter is fixated on the Lord alone, without recourse to anyone or anything else. The first reason may be due to not finding any other shelter. This is exemplified in the following statement of Devakī to Kṛṣṇa after the latter's birth: "O Original Person, a mortal being, terrified by the serpent of death, ran all over the universe seeking refuge, but could not find solace anywhere. But now having obtained the shelter of Your lotus feet by some good fortune, he rests in peace, and it is death that runs away from him."¹⁰

This verse clearly establishes that no one other than the Lord is capable of offering shelter from the fear of repeated birth and death. The second reason for taking shelter of the Lord and no one else is when one has abandoned his or her previous shelter, be it some religious process, knowledge or another person, all of which are also in need of shelter and hence unable to offer it. In this case, out of a lack of wisdom, a person had taken shelter of some unqualified path or person and realized it later. Then he or she thoroughly forsook that shelter and surrendered exclusively to the Lord. Lord Kṛṣṇa instructed Uddhava in this manner in *Srimad-Bhāgavata*.

"Therefore, Oh Uddhava, you should abandon all rules and prohibitions, all prescribed duties as well as the renunciation of such duties, and everything you have learnt along with that which remains to be studied, and take shelter of Me alone with the totality of your being. I am the very Self and hence the refuge of all embodied beings, and through Me you will attain complete freedom from fear."¹¹

Kṛṣṇa's statement in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (18.66), quoted earlier, can also be cited as an example of this type of surrender in which one forsakes one's earlier shelter.

Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī defines *śaraṇāgati* by citing the following statement from the *Vaiṣṇva Tantra*:

“There are six symptoms of self-surrender: - 1) a firm resolve to act congenially to the Lord, 2) to forsake all that is unfavourable to the Lord, 3) firm faith that the Lord will give one protection, 4) deliberate acceptance of the Lord as one’s guardian and nourisher, 5) submission of the self, and 6) humility.”¹²

These six items are divided into the whole and its constituent parts. The fourth item, *gopīṭva varaṇam*, or to accept the Lord as one’s guardian, is the *aṅgī*, the whole, and the other five items are its *angas*, or parts. The reason for this is that the word *śaraṇāgati*, or approaching one for shelter, is identical in meaning to the concept of selecting someone as one’s guardian or protector. A person resorts to *śaraṇāgati* because he or she seeks relief from the fear of material existence or from the fear of non-devotion to the Lord.

Acting congenially means to do that which is pleasing to the Lord and His devotees or that which nurtures the mood of surrender. Avoiding unfavourable acts means to reject all that is displeasing to the Lord and His devotees or that which is detrimental to the mood of surrender. One firmly resolves to do only those acts, which are favourable to one’s devotion to the Lord. These include the activities of serving the devotees of the Lord, taking care of the *Tulasī* plant, worshipping the deity, cleaning the temple and all other activities recommended in the *bhakti* literature. A devotee also avoids acts that are unfavourable. These include *sevāparādha*, offences committed in the course of worshipping the deity, and *nāmāparādha*, offences to the name of the Lord. Among these offences, those in relation to the name, which are ten in number, are especially detrimental and must be diligently avoided. In *Haribhaktivilāsa*, Sanātana Gosvāmī has given an exhaustive description of activities, which are to be done for the pleasure of the Lord and those, which are to be shunned. In *Bhakti-rasāmṛtasindhu*, Rūpa Gosvāmī has condensed this information and submitted a list of sixty-four primary limbs of devotion. A sincere devotee is expected to study these items thoroughly and follow them meticulously.

The third item is faith, that the Lord will grant one protection. *Śraddhā*, or faith, is the foundation of the *bhakti* edifice; and this faith is not a material concept but an aspect of the Lord’s

spiritual potency. One is endowed with *śraddhā* only by the saintly association and grace of a pure devotee of the Lord. Although faith is a prerequisite for any spiritual process, it is particularly so on the path of *bhakti*. Therefore, in *Bhakti-rasāmṛtasindhu* (1.4.15) Rūpa Gosvāmī has said, *ādau śraddhā*, “faith is the primary step in bhakti.”

It may be noted that the word used here in the definition of *śaraṇāgati* is *viśvāsa*. Although these two words, *śraddhā* and *viśvāsa*, are used as synonyms, the latter is accepted as the intensified stage of the former. Thus, *rakṣiṣyatiti viśvāsaḥ* means that one has absolutely no doubt that the Lord will offer him or her protection under all circumstances. This is exemplified in the following statement of Brahma in *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*:

“*Śrī Bhagavān*, who is the master of the three worlds and of the three qualities of material nature, will certainly act for my best interest.”¹³

The fourth item of *śaraṇāgati* is to accept the Lord as one’s protector. There is a very subtle difference between this item and the previous one. The previous item is defined as firm faith that the Lord will award protection, whereas this one entails conscious acceptance of the Lord as one’s protector. In the former case one expresses a general conviction that the Lord will offer protection, and is thus convinced that whatever situation one is placed in by the arrangement of the Lord is actually in one’s best interest, no matter how challenging. This mood is expressed in the *Bhāgavata* verse quoted above. In the latter case, however, one actively expresses one’s heart to the Lord and beseeches the Lord for protection. The prayers spoken by Draupadī and Gajendra are two outstanding examples of this. Draupadī prayed for the Lord’s protection when she was being stripped of her clothes by Duśśāsana in the assembly of the Kauravas. Gajendra prayed to Lord Nārāyaṇa when he was unable to extract his leg from the jaws of an alligator.

The fifth limb of *śaraṇāgati* is *ātma-nikṣepa*, or submitting oneself to the Lord. This implies that one will employ all one’s possessions, including the gross and subtle bodies, only in the service of the Lord. One will not use these things for any other purpose. One who has adopted this consciousness considers himself or herself as subservient to the Lord under all circumstances. He or she doesn’t

have an independent *abhimāna*, or identification, in relation to the subtle or gross bodies.

The last limb of *śaraṇāgati* is called *kārpaṇyam*, or humility. This implies that one has a feeling of insignificance in relation to the Lord, as expressed in this statement from the *Padyavali*. “Oh Lord, there is no one more merciful than You, and there is no one more deplorable than me.”¹⁴ Such a feeling is called *kārpaṇya*. In *Haribhaktivilāsa*, Sanātana Gosvāmī has quoted the same verse from the *Vaiṣṇava Tantra*, which defines *śaraṇāgati*. In commenting on the word *kārpaṇyam* he says, “To feel afflicted by material existence and cry repeatedly for the Lord’s protection is called *kārpaṇya*.”¹⁵

In his commentary on *Bhagavad-Gītā* (18.66) Śrī Viśvanātha Caṅkravartī Thakura also quotes the same verse that defines *śaraṇāgati* but he cites the reference as being from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. He also gives a different reading on the last line of the definition of *śaraṇāgati*. Instead of *kārpaṇyam* he quotes the verse as saying *akārpaṇyam*, or not feeling wretchedness. He explains that this means not to proclaim one’s feeling of destitution in front of others.¹⁶ This implies that a devotee who is surrendered to the Lord should not become a sycophant, flattering the wealthy in order to extract some alms from them. He or she should maintain his or her honor as a devotee of the Lord and not bring ill name to *bhakti*.

C) Result

For one who adopts *śaraṇāgati* the result is that he or she becomes free of all miseries and attains fearlessness. Lord Rāmacandra said: “If one surrenders unto Me just once, propitiating Me with the words, I am Yours, I award such a person complete freedom from fear. This is My promise.”¹⁷

Similarly, on the pretext of instructing Arjuna, Lord Kṛṣṇa made the following declaration intended for the benefit of all: “Abandon all variety of duties and take shelter of Me alone. I shall relieve you of all sins. Do not lament.”¹⁸

Miseries result from sins, and if the Lord relieves one from all sins, there will be no more miseries. The above declaration, although directed at Arjuna, is meant for all conditioned souls. Maitreya Muni expressed the same conclusion to Vidura:

“Oh Vidura, how can those who have taken shelter of Lord Hari be obstructed by miseries coming from the body, the mind, gods, human beings and sub-humans?”¹⁹

This means that a surrendered soul is free from the threefold misery, namely, *ādhyātmika*, *ādhidaivika* and *ādhibhautika*. On the other hand, those who do not take shelter of the Lord have to suffer continuously in the ocean of the material world. The fact that surrendered souls are freed from the miseries of material existence is stated by Brahmā in this verse:

“The lotus feet of the Lord are the refuge for great souls. For those who have taken complete shelter of the boat of the lotus feet of Lord Murāri, whose fame is auspicious, the ocean of material existence is like the water contained in the hoof-print of a calf. They attain the supreme abode of the Lord, and thus they never again become the stage upon which such miseries are enacted.”²⁰

In concluding this section of *Bhakti-Sandarbhā* on *śaraṇāgati* (*Anuccheda* 236), Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī says that one who executes all the limbs of *śaraṇāgati* achieves the complete result immediately. But those who do not follow all the limbs obtain the result gradually and in proportion to their actual degree of surrender.

One who takes complete shelter of the Lord becomes free from all miseries *ādhyātmika*, *ādhidaivika* and *ādhibhautika*. Moreover, such a surrendered soul experiences the sweetness of the Lord. Therefore, Uddhava glorified *śaraṇāgati* in the following verse:

“Oh Lord, for those whose hearts are scorched by the threefold miseries on the blazing path of material existence, I see no other refuge than the cooling shade of Your lotus feet, which are like an umbrella that emits a delightful shower of nectar.”²¹

D) Eligibility

Unlike the paths of karma and *jñāna*, which both entail specific prerequisites; everyone has the *adhikāra*, or eligibility, to adopt the process of *śaraṇāgati* in relation to the Lord. There are no restrictions on the basis of gender, creed, caste, age or any such material criteria related to the gross body. This fact is conveyed by Śrī Śukadeva in his prayers to the Lord: “I offer obeisance unto the all-powerful Lord. Just by taking shelter of His devotees all types of sinful people become purified, including the Kiratas, Hunas,

Andhras, Pulindas, Pukkasas, Abhiras, Śumbhā Kaṅkas, Yavanas and the Khasas.”²²

From this it is clear that it is not necessary to belong to one of the upper three *varṇās* the *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, or *vaiśyas* to take shelter of the Lord.

E) Śaraṇāgati and Ātma-nivedanam

In *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*²³, Prahlāda mentions nine types of devotion. The last item in this list is *ātma-nivedanam*, or self-surrender. This is not the same as *śaraṇāgati*, although it appears to be so. *ātma-nivedanam* means to submit one's *ātmā* to the Lord. In describing *ātma-nivedanam* in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, Śrī Rupa Gosvāmī has explained that the word *ātman* has two meanings. Some scholars have defined the word *ātman* as the seat of *ahantā*, or the sense of 'I', which refers to the *dehī* or *jīva*, the living being. Others define *ātman* as the seat of *mamatva*, or the sense of 'my', which refers to the *deha*, the material body.²⁴ Because the word *ātman* is defined in these two ways, *ātma-nivedanam* is also of two types namely, submitting one's *dehī* to the Lord and submitting one's *deha* to the Lord.

In his commentary on *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu*, Jīva Gosvāmī explains that the major difference between *śaraṇāgati* and *ātma-nivedanam* is that the former lays stress on accepting the Lord as one's protector and the latter on submitting one's self to the authority of the Lord.²⁵ In *ātma-nivedanam* one feels utterly dependent on the Lord. In *śaraṇāgati*, however, one is resolved to act congenially towards the Lord and His devotees. Such a feeling is missing in *ātma-nivedanam*. Submission of the body to the Lord, in particular, has been compared in *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* to the attitude one adopts after selling a bull to another person. Once one sells the bull, one no longer plans or endeavors for its maintenance. Such concerns become the responsibility of the new master. Similarly, once one submits one's body to the Lord, one is no longer concerned with its sustenance. He or she depends entirely on the maintenance and protection of the Lord.

Jīva Gosvāmī explains in his commentary on *Bhaktirasāmṛtasindhu* that although this type of surrender is extremely rare, its glory is somewhat diminished because it is devoid of a specific feeling of love for the Lord. He explains that *ātma-*

nivedanam can be performed without loving sentiment or accompanied by sentiments such as servitorship, friendship and so on. He cites Bali Maharaja as an example of someone who performed *ātma-nivedanam* without loving sentiment when he offered himself to Lord Vāmana in order to fulfill his promise to the Lord to grant Him three steps of land. Another reference to this is found in the following statement of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which also indicates that even this type of *ātma-nivedanam* leads to immortality:

“When a mortal being surrenders himself to Me, relinquishing all duties, I desire to bless such a soul. Attaining immortality, such a person becomes eligible to attain the state of complete identification with Me.”²⁶

Jīva Gosvāmī continues to explain that when *ātma-nivedanam* is accompanied by a devotee’s predominant mood of love for the Lord, it becomes exceedingly glorious. An example of *ātma-nivedanam* mixed with the mood of servitude is seen in the life of King Ambarīṣa, which is described in the following verses: “Ambarīṣa Maharaja engaged his mind exclusively on the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa, his speech in describing the virtues of the Lord, his hands in cleansing the temple of Śrī Hari, and his ears in hearing the excellent pastimes of Lord Acyuta. He employed his eyes in seeing the deities and temples of Lord Mukunda, his tactile sense in touching the limbs of the devotees of the Lord, his nose in smelling the fragrance of the *Tulasī* leaves offered to the Lord’s lotus feet, and his tongue in tasting the *prasāda* offered to the Lord. He employed his feet in walking to the temples and holy places of Lord Hari, and his head in bowing down before Lord Kṛṣṇa. He desired only to attain the service of the Lord and was devoid of aspiration for any material enjoyment. He carried out all these activities in such a way that the love for Lord Kṛṣṇa that is present in His surrendered devotees might also manifest in him.”²⁷

Jīva Gosvāmī also mentions Rukmīṇī as a further example of *ātma-nivedanam* combined with a specific loving sentiment for the Lord. Rukmīṇī’s submission to Kṛṣṇa was imbued with her mood of conjugal attraction for Him, as expressed in this verse: “Therefore, my Lord and beloved, I have chosen You as my husband and have offered this body to You. Please come here and accept me as Your wife.”²⁸

According to the definition of *Śaraṇāgati* cited earlier from the *Vaiṣṇava Tantra*, *ātma-nikṣepa*, which is a synonym of *ātma-nivedana*, is one part of *śaraṇāgati*. Therefore, *ātma-nivedana* is included in complete *śaraṇāgati*.

F) The Place of Śaraṇāgati in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism

In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, *Śaraṇāgati* is the primary step in devotion. All other limbs of devotion are to be executed only after *Śaraṇāgati*. As stated above, the basic disease of the living entity in the material world is *bahir-mukhatva*, or aversion towards the Lord. This cannot be alleviated unless one takes to *Śaraṇāgati*. *Śaraṇāgati* grants *tadiyatva*, or the feeling of belonging to the Lord. When a person becomes the property of the Lord, *māyā* can no longer touch her or him.

Therefore, in enumerating the sixty-four limbs of devotion, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmi has placed *guru-padāśraya*, or taking shelter of a spiritual teacher, at the top of the list. Everything else is based on this vital step. Merely *Śaraṇāgati* can attain perfection. However, if one has a yearning for a particular type of loving relationship with the Lord, as found in the moods of *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* or *mādhurya*, one should follow other specific practices of devotion, such as service to one's *guru* along with *Śaraṇāgati*. Without *Śaraṇāgati* one maintains one's independent sense of ego. As long as one maintains the mentality of being separate from the Lord, one's spiritual practice is null and void. Brahmā made this point clear in his prayers:

"Oh! Lord, as long as the living entities consider themselves to be separate from You, due to the influence of the deluding potency which entices them toward material sense enjoyment, they cannot get free from this material existence even though it is essentially unreal and generate; temporary results, which in the end lead only to misery."²⁹

In Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism *karmārpanam*, or offering one's prescribed duties to the Lord, is not accepted as *bhakti* because the performer still maintains his individual sense of ego independent from the Lord. One must first take shelter of the Lord by offering one's own self, and then perform actions that are congenial to the Lord and His devotees.

G) Conclusion

Śaraṇāgati in Gauḍiṣya Vaiṣṇavism goes far beyond mouthing the words, “I surrender unto You.” It penetrates deep into the consciousness where one makes a firm resolve to always act favorably to the Lord and to avoid all displeasing acts. It corresponds identically to the definition of *uttamā-bhakti*, which states that a devotee does not hanker for anything save and except to serve the Lord with love through all his or her actions. Devotees have no independent ego in relation to the mortal body; rather, they consider themselves as servants of the Lord. The constitutional position of the pure living entity is to be a servant of the Lord, and *śaraṇāgati* is a manifestation of this state. Therefore, *śaraṇāgati* bestows all perfection, as stated in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (quoted in *Bhakti-Sandarbhā*, *Anuccheda* 237): “Those who have forsaken meditation and yoga practice and taken refuge of You, transcend death and attain Your spiritual abode, *Vaiṣṇava*.”³⁰

Notes and References

- 1 *Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā* (BG), Kṛṣṇadās Bābā, Vrindavana, 1966, 15.7: *mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ*
- 2 *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (Bhag.), Sri Rama Narayana Vidyaratna (SRNV), Baharampura, Mursidabada, 1886, 11.22.10: *anādy-avidyāyuktasya puruṣasya*
- 3 Jīva Gosvāmī, *Bhakti-Sandarbhā* (BS), Sri Gadadhara Gaurahari Press, Vrindavana, 1986, *Anu.1: Taṭastha-śakti-rūpāṇām cid-eka-rasānām apyanādi-parā-tattva-jñāna-saṁsargābhāva-maya tad-vaimukhya-labdha-chidrayā tan-māyayāvṛta-sva-svarūpa-jñānānām tayaiva sattva-rajastamomaye jaḍe pradhāne racitātma-bhāvānām jīvānām saṁsāraduḥkham ca jñāpitam.*
- 4 *Bhāg.* (SRNV).11.19.9:
*Tāpa-trayeṇābhīhatasya ghore
santapyamānasya bhavādhvaniṣa/
Paśyāmi nānyaccaraṇam tavāṅghri-dvandvāta-
patrād amṛtābhivarṣāt//*

⁵ BG.7.14:

*Daivi hyeṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā/
Mam eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te//*

⁶ Ibid.18.66:

*Sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇam vraja/
Ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ//*

⁷ Śabdakalpadrūma Vol. 5 p. 27, Nag Publishers, New Delhi, 1987: śaraṇam, kri, śṛṇāti duḥkham aneneṭi, śṛ+lyuṭ

⁸ Jiva Gosvāmī, Durgamasanḡamani tīkā on Bhakti-rasārṇava Sindhu, Sri Harinama Press, Vrindavana, 1981, 1.2.200: śaraṇam prapanno'smi rakṣūrtvena vṛtavān asmi, śaraṇam tadāśrayam prāptaḥ, śaraṇaśabdena hi tad-dvayam apyucyate.

⁹ Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Hari-Bhakti-Vilāsa (SHBV), Sri Gadādhara Gaurahari Press, Vrindavana, 1986, Part 2, 11.672):

*Ituham ca bodhyam vidvadbhīḥ śaraṇāpatīlakṣaṇam/
Vācā hṛdā ca tanvāpi kṛṣṇaikāśrayaṇam hi yaḥ//*

¹⁰ Bhāg (SRNV). 10.3.27:

*Martyo mṛtyuvyāla-bhūaḥ palāyan
lokān sarvān nirbhayaṁ nādhyagacchat/
Tvat pādābjaṁ prāpya yadṛcchayādyā
svasthaḥ śete mṛtyurasmād apatī//*

¹¹ Ibid.11.12.14-15:

*Tasmāt tvam uddhavotsṛjya codanāṁ praticodanān/
Pravṛttam ca nivṛttam ca śrotavyaṁ śrutam eva ca//
Mām ekaṁ eva śaraṇam ātmānaṁ sarva-dehinām/
Yāhi sarvātmabhāvena mayā syā hyakutobhayaḥ//*

¹² Jiva Gosvāmī, BS, Anu.236:

*Ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam/
Rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso gopṭṛtva varaṇam tathā/
Ātma-nikṣepa kārṇaṇye śaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatīḥ/*

¹³ Bhāg (SRNV). 3.16.37:

Kṣemaṁ vidhāsyati sa no bhagavāṁstryadhīśaḥ/

¹⁴ Rūpa Gosvāmī, Padyāvalī, Bhakta Bharata Grantha Mala, Cara Sampradaya Asrama, Vrindavan, 1986, stanza 66:

Parama kārūṇiko na bhavet paraḥ parama śocyatāmo na ca mat paraḥ/

15 Sanātana Gosvāmi, *SHBV*, Part 2, 11.676, *ūkā*: *kārpaṇyam ca bhagavan rakṣa rakṣa ityādi-prakāreṇārūṭatvam*

16 Viśvanātha Cakravartī Thākura, Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gītā, Kṛṣṇadās Bābā, Vrindavana, 1966, 18.66, *ūkā*: The last line of the definition of *śaraṇāgati* reads as follows, *niḥkṣepaṇam akārpaṇyam ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ*. Viśvanātha's commentary on the word *akārpaṇyam* is as follows, *akārpaṇyam nānyatra kvāpi sva-dainya-jñāpanam iti*.

17 *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa*, Parimal Publications, Shakti Nagar, Delhi, 1990, 6.18.33:

Sakṛd eva prapanno yastavasmṛti ca yācate/

Abhayam sarvathā tasmai dadāmyetad vrataṁ mama//

18 See note 6.

19 *Bhāg*.(SRNV). 3.22.37:

Śāstrā mānasā divyā vaiyāse ye ca mānuṣāḥ/

Bhautikāś ca katham kleśā bādheran hari-saṁśrayam//

20 *Ibid*. 10.14.58:

Samāśritā ye padapallavaplavam

mahatpadaṁ puṇyayaśo murāreḥ/

Bhavāmbudhir vatsa padaṁ paraṁ padaṁ

padam padam yad-vipadām na teṣām//

21 See note 4.

22 *Ibid*. 2.4.18:

kirāta-hūnāndhra-pulinda-pukkaśā

ābhira-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ

ye'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ

śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ

23 *Bhāg* (SRNV).7.5.23.

24 Rūpa Gosvāmī, *BRS*. 1.2.195:

Artho dvidhātmasābdasya paṇḍitairupapadyate/

Dehyahantāspadaḥ kaiścid dehaṁ kaiścinmamatvabhāk//

25 *Ibid*.1.2.198, *ūkā*: *Śaraṇāpatīḥ khalu raksūrtvena varaṇam tadidam tu svāumanastadāyattatāśampādanam iti bhedaḥ*.

26 Bhāg (SRNV), 11.29.34:

*Martyo yadā tyakta-samasta-karmā
nivediūtmā vicikirṣito me/
Tadā mṛtatvaṁ pratipadyamāno
mayātmabhūyā ca kalpate vai//*

27 Ibid. 9.4.18-20:

*Sa vai manaḥ kṛṣṇa-padāravindayor
vacāṁsi vaikunṭha-guṇānuvarṇane/
Karau harermandira-mārjanādiṣu
śruām cakārācyuta-sat-kathodaye//
Mukunda-līṅgālaya-darśane dr̥ṣau
tad-bhṛtya-gātra-sparśe 'ṅga-saṅgamam/
Ghrāṇaṁ ca tat-pāda-saroja-saurabhe
śrīmat-tulasyām rasanām tad-arpite//
Padau hareḥ kṣetra-padānusarpaṇe
śīro hr̥ṣikeśa-padābhivandane/
Kāmaṁ ca dāsyē na tu kāma-kāmyayā
yathottama-śloka-janāśrayā ratih//*

28 Bhāg (SRNV), 10.52.39:

*Tanme bhavān khalu vṛtaḥ pati aṅgajāyām
ātmārpiṭaś ca bhavato 'tra vibho vidhehi/*

29 Ibid. 3.9.9:

*Yāvat prthaktvam idam ātmana indriyārtha-māyā-balaṁ
bhagavatojana īśa paśyet/
Tāvan na saṁsṛtirasau pratisaṅkrameta vyarthāpi
duḥkha-nivahaṁ vahatikriyarthā//*

30 Jiva Gosvāmī, BS. Anu. 237, quoted from Garuḍa Purāṇa:

*Śaraṇam taṁ prapannā ye dhyānayogavivarjūḥ/
Te vai mṛtyum atīkramya yānti tadvaiṣṇavaṁ padam//*

**Śaraṇāgati in Svāminārāyaṇa (uddhavi-vaiṣṇava)
sampradāya of Sahajānanadaḥji (navya-viśiṣṭādvaita)**

DR. RAMESH M. DAVE

[Śrī Sahajānanadaḥji, alias Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa (1781 AD – 1830 AD) is the champion of *Navya-viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta*, and the founder of *Uddhavi-Vaiṣṇava/Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya*, a form of pure *Vaiṣṇavism*. This *Vedānta* holds the doctrine of five eternal realities, namely, (i) *Parabrahman*: the Supreme Self (God), identified as Lord Nārāyaṇa; (ii) *Akṣara-brahman*, (iii) *Māyā-prakṛti*; (iv) Plurality of *Īśvaras* i.e. cosmic selves and (v) plurality of *Jivas* i.e. finite selves, explained on the *Upaniṣadic* principle of *Śarīra-Śarīri-Sambandha*.]

Śaraṇāgati:

Āśrayaṇa, *Śaraṇāgati*, *prapatti*, *nyāsa*, *ātma-nivedana*, *dāsatva* (*kainkarya*) and *pativrata bhakti* (*pātivratya*) are all treated as having equal meaning or near synonyms of one another. The *Śaraṇāgati* or *prapatti* doctrine is centered around three constituents namely (i) *Śaranya*: the Supreme Lord, (ii) *Śaraṇāgata* i.e. the seeker of refuge and (iii) *Śaraṇāgati* i.e. the act and the process of surrendering (refuge seeking).

Śaraṇāgati is a free act of surrendering one's finite limited freedom at the altar of eternally free Lord Who is the bestower of protection, emancipation and freedom in fullness to the bound souls. It consists in self-offering or self-oblation at the feet of the Lord of Mercy, Who yields deliverance to the *jivas* from the carrier of evil and ignorant pursuit. It is rooted in total commitment to God, in thought, speech and action.

Āśrayaṇa /Śaraṇāgati has universal appeal to all seekers, whether they be high born or low born, men or women, rich or poor, for it assures emancipation to all. The doctrine of Śaraṇāgati entails in it a judicious blend of *dāsatva-bhakti* and *pativrata-bhakti*. Its basis lies in firm faith, utter humility and total dependence on God. The use of the word 'namah' as a suffix in recitation of all mantras, oblations, offerings and prayers implies self-surrender in all humility.

In *Swāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya Śaraṇāgati* is not an alternative to bhakti, but the basic requirement to all spiritual endeavor, including bhakti. *Śaraṇāgati* entails bhakti, but not vice-versa. Āśrayaṇa (prapatti) is an indispensable precondition for *sevā-bhakti* oriented and emancipation oriented spiritual discipline. Therefore he who has sought refuge in God and loves and worships Him, deserves to be called a 'bhakta' in true sense of the term.

When a man gives up over-confidence, self-reliance and misdirected efforts, and through the act of *prapatti* puts himself in the protection of God, He then whole-heartedly takes over the responsibility of such a surrendered one. Here, no *sādhana* (effort/endeavour) is required except the act of surrendering in all meekness with full faith in his Lord. Thus no effort or possession of a man can ever be a means of seeking protection from Him and eliciting His grace. What is needed here is the sense of utter dependence and intense desire for protection from Almighty God. With avowing one's helplessness and absolute trust in saving grace of God, one must remember that He alone is my highest goal and the means (*Prāpyam prāpakam ca*).

Those who forget total self-awareness in God-love and God-faith are such that in surfeit of love and trust they act like self-risking mad men oblivious of the whole world. So, *prapatti* expects the surrender of one's power of action and anxiety. Such a seeker, when

seeks refuge in God, there occurs cessation of self-efforts and reliance on one's own strength and ability. For him, now no more self-willed course of action but God-willed course of life and God-directed mode of conduct alone is the mission of life.

In Śaraṇāgati, self-love and self-conceit have no place. Its basis is eternal dependence on God. It therefore, believes in futility of self-effort unaided by firm belief in God-given strength and support. It expects the abandonment of egoism in its myriad forms. The basic requirement in *prapatti* is not the abandonment of efforts and duties forever, but the abandonment of ego, self-will, self-chosen course of action and self-effort.

Egolessness occurs when 'I' is erased, and it gets erased when feeling of being 'dust and ash' before God and His devotees occurs in mind. Such humility grows in the heart when the elixir of *nāhātmya-jñāna* or the knowledge of the glory and excellence of God combines with the act of Śaraṇāgati. Consequently, the true servitorship (*dāsarva*) emerges and fear of fall from the spiritual path and re-entanglement into *samsāra* does not arise.

The goal of seeking Śaraṇāgati cannot be conditional, linked with some personal or worldly gain, such as maintenance or restoration of good health, improving economic prospects, perpetuation and protection of progeny etc. Any such desire cannot be the motive behind Śaraṇāgati as it involves a bargain and *Kāmanā* (desire) for things other than 'the Grace for Grace's sake.'

Since in the *Navya-viśiṣṭādvaita* of Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa its metaphysical and moral-religious philosophy rests on the basic principle of *Śarīra-śarīri-sambandha*, it logically implies that *śarva-arīri Prarbrahman-Nārāyaṇa* is both the *upāya* (means) and the *upeya* (end). Just a child who out of ignorance ran into the cage having closely knit barbed wire fencing, is to be pulled out, and hence shown a handful of sugar candy, and the child oblivious of scratches

and bruises caused to him by the thorny wiring comes out and picks up and enjoys the candy. Here, sugar-candy is both the means (*upāya*) and the end (*upeya*). In the like manner, the *sarvasukhamaya* Śrī Hari is both the *upāya* and the *upeya*. *Prapatti* places the *bhakta* in the heart of God; it is both the *upāya* and the *upeya*. As such the essentials of *bhakti* and *prapatti* are the same, because both involve total faith in the saving grace of God as the *upāya* and the *upeya*. The true import of all the 32 *Brahmavidyās* in essence is the *Nyāsa-vidyā* or *Śaraṇāgati*.

ŚARANYA

The Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa is the Universal Savior and Redeemer¹. He alone is the *Śaranya* Lord of all. He is the only Hope, only strength and only refuge or the shelter for all *jīvas* labouring under the load of past *karmas*, ignorance and consequent suffering. He gives succour, safety, and security to souls seeking refuge in Him. The core content of the theory of *Śaraṇāgati* is that the Lord of grace seeks the *Śaraṇāgata* and draws them to Himself.

In the *Sarvamaṅgalanāmāvalī*, Śatānandamuni describes the Lord as ‘*śaraṇyaḥ*’², ‘*bhakta-vatsalaḥ*’³ (mother-like care taker of devotees), ‘*prapanna abhayadaḥ*’⁴ (offerer of fearlessness to surrendered one). Here the word *abhayadaḥ* is very important. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* says ‘*te anghrim abhayam*’⁵. He is the offerer of immunity from all fear i.e. the bestower of fearlessness and ‘*yad bibhetti svayam bhayam*’⁶ i.e. ‘Fear itself is afraid of the Lord’ and hence He alone is the dispeller of all fear. That is the reason why *Sarvamaṅgalanāmāvalī* describes the Supreme Almighty Lord as ‘*bhayatrātre*’⁷ (Saviour from fear) and ‘*bhakta trātre*’⁸ (Saviour of devotee) ‘*Tvayā abhiguptā vicaranī nirbhayāḥ*’⁹, “Oh Lord, protected on all sides by You, they (*śaraṇāgata*) move about freely-fearlessly”. Since all souls are beginninglessly entrapped in the

cobweb of *Janma-roga-vyādhi-jarā-mṛtyu*, (birth-disease-suffering-oldage-death), they live in constant fear and insecurity. Therefore, 'abhaya' or fearlessness granted by the Lord has immeasurable value. Both *Bhāgavatam* and *Bhaktacintāmaṇi* declare: "The study of the *Vedas*, sacrificial acts, penance and charitable gifts, O Holy Lord, can not equal even a sixteenth portion of the merit that one acquires by rendering fearlessness from the cycles of birth and death to the bound jivas."¹⁰

God's qualities of easy accessibility (*saulabhya*) and overflowing mercy and compassion are such that He lavishes His grace on the lowliest and fallen ones tormented in the worldly turmoil. In his *Guru-Bhajana-Stotram*, Dinānāth Bhaṭṭa writes:

*"Karuṇāmaya cārulocanam, śaraṇāyāta janārtimocanam;
Patitoddharṇāya tatparam, saha-jānanda gurum bhajesadā.
Śaraṇāgata pāpa parvatam, gaṇayitvā na tadiya sadguṇam;
Aṇumapya tulam hi manyate, Sahajānanda gurum bhaje sadā"* -

I offer my devotion to him whose beautiful eyes are filled with *karuṇā*/mercy, Who redeems the refuge-seekers from all suffering and He is always eagerly waiting to uplift the fallen and forlorn. He is so kind and merciful that he does not look at the heaps and heaps of sins of the supplicant refuge-seeker but simply looks at whatever little good or merit he has to consider him as eligible for the bestowal of fearlessness. He, therefore, is described as '*Nijāśrītānām sakalārtihantā*'¹¹ i.e. the Redeemer of His surrendered-ones and destroyer of their pain and suffering.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Durvāsa in *Bhāgavatam*¹², Those who renouncing attachments to their spouse, home, children, kith and kin, wealth and pleasures of here and hereafter take refuge in Me, I never leave them, I never betray them." In addition, *Mahābhārata*¹³ assures: they, who surrender at the feet of the Lord, are never

infatuated, because Lord Janārdana protects them from all fear by bestowing fearlessness.

Referring to *Skanda-Purāṇa* and the *Geetā*, Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa reiterates, they are liberated from *māyā* (*samsāra*), who seek refuge in Me. Let them approach Me with any attitude (*bhāva*), the seekers of refuge definitely become happy forever, and do not have to undergo the cycles of birth and death, like followers of the deities of the lower order. In his *Vacanāmṛtam*, Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa says: *māyā-avidyā* of the nature of *susupti-avasthā* and *sāmyāvasthā* (*Kāraṇa-śarīra*) is extremely difficult to cross over, even by the best of the *jñānis* and yogis, which however can be easily crossed over through the *āśrayaṇa* (surrendering) at the feet of Lord God or God-possessed Guru (*Parama-Ekāntika-Satpuruṣa*), for they alone are redeemer. Thus, the two, namely, the God and the *Guru* are described as – ‘*prapannānām asti śreyaskara*’ in HVSS¹⁴. Therefore, disregarding the Supreme Lord, if ever, one seeks refuge in any being of a lower order, he will be swallowed away by the *kāla-śakti* of the Lord.

In Short, the transcendental omnipotent Lord alone is the Refuge of all, for He alone is *kartum*, *akartum*, and *anyathākartum samartha*. i.e. endowed with the supernatural power to do, undo and do things otherwise. He is beyond the veil of *māyā*. He is the home of all happiness, infinite number of infinitely auspicious attributes and of the nature of bliss. *Parabrahman* as the Lord of all possesses the attributes of *saṁlabhya* (easy accessibility), *kāruṇya* (overflowing mercy), *vātsalya* (parent-like loving care and concern), *mādhurya* (sweet-heartedness) *sukhadātā* (happiness-bestower) and *abhaya-pradātā* (bestower of fearlessness).

Svāminārāyaṇī tradition holds that, *Akṣarabrahman* is inseparably united with the Supreme Lord Puruṣottama (Nārāyaṇa/*Parabrahman*) by his most intense love, servitude and devotion.

Akṣarabrahman is viewed as the mediator (intercessor) between souls and God. Only when souls approximate the height of *Akṣarabrahman*, they become eligible to enjoy God's bliss in highest plenitude. Like Śrī/Lakṣmī, *Akṣarabrahman* descends on earth along with God, when He descends. However, after the formal departure of God from earth, He keeps His manifestation continuous in and through *Akṣarabrahman*, in the form of the *Guru*, frequently described as *Akṣara-Guru*. So, the *Guru* is both the mediator and the manifestor of God's divinity in all its grace and glory in himself. God lives, works, and redeems the seekers of shelter through the *Akṣara-Guru*. God is thus perennially present on this earth through God-intoxicated saint i.e. *Akṣara-Guru (Parama-Ekāntika-Satpuruṣa)*. This is viewed as the ceaseless invasion of His divine mercy in the age of moral and spiritual crisis of *Kaliyuga*. Thus though as such the supreme Lord *Puruṣottama* alone is the refuge for all, however, in tune with *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*, Śrī Svāmīnārāyaṇa regards the God possessed *Ekāntika* Saint (i.e. *Gurus*: the *Brahmasvarūpa-Satpuruṣa*) also as the refuge for the seekers.¹⁵ Since God (*Parabrahman*) is believed to remain manifest perennially in and through the person of *Brahmasvarūpa Satpuruṣa (Guru)*, the seekers who seek refuge in him are in fact seeking refuge in God.

God showers his grace and redeems the surrendered-one of all his vices and insufficiencies when He sees him serving the *Guru*: the true saint, relentlessly for a long time. Thus you serve the *Guru* and earn the grace of God, says Śrī Svāmīnārāyaṇa.¹⁶ "Just as food is the life-sustaining requirement for the breathing creatures, so am I the only Protector-Saviour for all afflicted beings; and just as dharma (righteous conduct/*punya* merit) is the only dependable wealth to rely upon in the heavenly abodes hereafter, so are the pious saints the only resort-&-refuge for a man scared of being born again and again on this mortal plane", endorses *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.¹⁷ The

Śrutis (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*) and *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* ask the seekers to approach the *Guru* for their spiritual uplift and accomplishments.¹⁸ In the same vein, Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa enjoins the *Guru-Caraṇa-Śaraṇa* as an integral part of the spiritual *sādhana*.

ŚARAṆĀGATA

Śaraṇāgata is the seeker of refuge, who ought to possess *daivi-sampat*, firm faith and absolute confidence in the saving grace of the *raṅśaka* (the protector). For him, God is the only hope, only strength and only refuge. Unconditional, unreserved, frank submission, and contrition in all sincerity open up the floodgate of God's mercy. Before eternally free Almighty God, all are weak and infirm to beg protection and perform self-surrender. Worldly possessions of power, wealth, high birth, scholarship, physical strength etc. have no value, and therefore, all are eligible to seek refuge at the feet of God, the Universal Saviour and Redeemer. In *Svāminārāyaṇi* pathway to God, the *summum bonum* of all spiritual endeavour is attainment of the best quality *dāsatva-bhakti* (*kainkarya*) on par with *Akṣarabrahman*, the ideal devotee-*dāsa* of God. For it, genuine feeling of one's moral limitation and utter littleness is necessary.

A refuge seeker, full of faith and commitment to God knows that as a finite limited soul, all his efforts and endeavours for emancipation are deficient and incomplete. They are not sufficient and efficacious enough to reach the goal. Hence, with perseverance he keeps his worshipful efforts continuous, like an enthusiast child attempting to reach out a fruit on a leaned branch-end of a tree, by repeated high hops and jumps with his hand fully stretched out. A kind hearted tall man sees it, he comes to the rescue of the child, stretching his hand, he plucks the fruit and gets it to the child. In the same way, God, seeing the efforts of His devotee takes mercy on

him, and holding his hand, He uplifts him and redeems him from the ocean of *samsāra*. Thus patronage of God entails all other means and endeavours of highest accomplishment. It also takes care of protecting a devotee from great danger.

When a devotee is well-anchored in God as the surrendered-servant, he certainly has hopes of winning the grace of God through right efforts and obedience. When *samāśrayaṇa* i.e. refuge-seeking is extolled as the sole and sufficient means, there is no intention to deny or undermine the value and importance of other means such as duty-morality (*dharma*), knowledge (*jñāna*), renunciation-detachment (*tyāga-vairāgya*), devotion (*bhakti*) etc. It is extolled to highest position simply because it brings forth all of them. Consequently, in the heart of the surrendered-one, there is rise and effervescence of virtues like *dharma*, *jñāna*, *vairāgya*, *bhakti* etc. much easily by the support, strength and grace of God.

A devout wife (*pativrata-stri*) remains loyal to her husband with undivided fidelity. She does not cast her eyes on any man save her husband. However handsome, young, wealthy, strong or talented the other man may be, a devout wife remains loyal to her husband alone and does not seek company of anyone else except her spouse.¹⁹ Similarly, a *Śaraṇāgata* (surrendered-one) is wedded to God by *pativrata-bhakti* besides being his *dāsa* or servitor. He does not show any interest in worldly pleasures. His fidelity and commitment to his God does not change. He is absolutely unmoved and unfaltered by the striking greatness or miraculous powers of persons, human or divine. For him, his Lord is his whole and sole. He is his only Goal, He is the only solace, support and saviour, here and hereafter. He just cannot like and love with his heart and soul any one else except his Lord.

As and when a seeker knows and digests the transcendental glory and powers of God, and as he acquires more virtues and excellence, his devout servitorship (*dāsa-bhāva*) towards God becomes more firm and deep²⁰. Like the great devotee Uddhava, when one knows the greatness and value of God and His devotees, he reaches the laudable lowly state of becoming the servant of servants of God. He spontaneously gives up anger, pride, envy etc²¹. He, in his humility, remains like 'ash and dust' before the smallest devotee of God. So, "having obtained the sense of servitude, worship God", says *Bṛhatsamhitā*.

Hanumān, the best devotee of Śrī Rāma, Uddhava²² the best devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Guṇātītānadaji the best devotee of Śrī Svāmināryāyana are quoted as the best models for *dāsabhāva* in this *sampradāya*. When a seeker takes refuge at the feet of God, through a process of initiation called '*Vartamāna-dikṣā*', he is assured of freedom from the whole stock of past karmas known as *sañcita-karma*. This implies that, he will be relieved of all the sins and from the transmigratory cycles of birth and death, forever. However, the surrendered one has to work out all necessary efforts, acquire right resolute knowledge of God's transcendental nature and glory, and abide by the codes of conduct enjoined by God through the scriptures; failing which he loses the golden opportunity of freedom forever. Thus, the act of initiation (*Vartamāna-dikṣā*) does not give surrendered-one a license to act in a whimsical or wanton ways.

The procedure adopted in the submission to a Guru for seeking refuge in God through *Vartamāna-dikṣā* consists in handing over the seeker to God after the utterance of commitment-prayer:

*Kāla-māyā-pāpa-karma-yamadūta-bhayād-aham/
Svāminārāyaṇa śaraṇam prapanno'smi sa pātu mām*²³

'Tired and anxious of the fear of *kāla*, *māyā*, deserts
of the sins of my past lives and fear of *Yamadūta* –

the courier of god of death, Oh Lord Svāminārāyaṇa,
I seek refuge at your feet, with a prayer, begging
your protection’.

Having sought *āśrayaṇa* in this way, the seeker then prays,
“From now onwards, ‘Thou art my Master and I am your servant
(*dāsa*). Kindly pardon my sins and misdeeds of the past and through
your behest lead me to follow your will and words. Kindly engage
me in the *dāsakarma* of your choice”.

Initiation into the fellowship of God through ‘*vartamāna-
dīkṣā*’ has another important advantage that now the surrendered-
one need not fear any harassment from evil spirits, malefic influence
of stars and deities of lower order. He has come under the protective
umbrella of the Supreme Godhead, Who rules over all, controls all,
is the ensouling principle of all and is the redeemer of all.²⁴ So, the
devotee leads his spiritual life fearlessly, for he has the ‘*abhaya-hasta*’
(assurance of fearlessness) of God on him. His *vāsanās* (latent
cravings of past lives) shall get consumed and his causal body (*kāraṇa-
śarīra*) shall wear out through right knowledge of God and perfect
obedience of His commands, on account of his act of surrender to
God. Thus he enjoys the privilege of freeing himself forever, which
otherwise is not available to refugeless wanton *jīvas*.

Through seeking refuge in God, the *āśrita* now finds his
membership in a very large community/fellowship of like-minded
dedicated-brethrens’ (*prapanna-kula*). It is a membership in the
brotherhood of men of God, in which no one is high born or low
born, rich or poor, power-wielder or powerless, native or foreigner.
The divisive norms and social barriers no more exist in the fellowship
of *āśrita-bhaktas*. The relationship with the *Śaraṇya*-Lord now
governs each one’s perception. All are viewed as the children of
God, as the members of the same family. He loves all of them as the
respectable co-farers in the pathway to God. He sees good in all and

does not displease anyone for he doesn't want to displease God: the Father and protector of all.

According to Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa, after surrendering at the feet of God, the jīva's responsibility to respond to the will and expectations and commands of God becomes much greater. So, when a jīva seeks God's grace, he will have to strive sincerely to deserve it. The śaraṇāgata has to abide by all duties that are applicable to him after seeking Śaraṇāgati. He now has to reconstruct his life according to the will of God. So far, he enjoyed his will as his own, but now it is no more his own will; rather God's will is his will. When a baby gets closer to the breast of the mother, there is spontaneous secretion of milk out of vātsalya for it, but baby has to now remain clung to the breast and suck - and - sip the milk. Thus, to respond to the overflowing grace of Śaraṇya - Lord, appropriate efforts of śaraṇāgata are necessary. That is why, in Satsaṅgījīvanam, the Lord says, "You have sought refuge in Me and you are blessed now, nevertheless you will have to abide yourself by duties and endeavours necessary to win greater shower of grace. Of course, the prapaṇna always acts rightly, does righteous kriyamāṇa because he cannot act contrary to the wish, will and command of God."²⁵

Explicating the import of carama-śloka (18-66) of the Gitā, Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa says: the duties and preparations required of an aspirant seeking refuge at the feet of God²⁶ are:

Giving up all other hopes, aspirations and strings of support a refuge-seeker must remember that:-

- i) God is eternally formful-divine and is the only support, saviour and redeemer.²⁷
- ii) Even if the suffering as great as total doom of the whole world befalls, there should be a conviction (resolute understanding) that no one save my God is the protector.²⁸

- iii) Whatever (if at all) I need, I shall expect it or ask it from none other (i.e. no other deity) than my God.²⁹
- iv) I shall live strictly in tune with the will of God, and shall never stray away from His will and behest, for I do not want to displease Him the slightest.³⁰
- v) I shall give up all my untoward habits and tendencies, and shall whole-heartedly change my nature and habits to please Him. I shall exterminate vices from my heart and shall fill it with virtues to please Him.
- vi) I shall give up all my resolves and decisions to live life in consonance with His will.
- vii) Truly surrendered-one offers and engages all his possessions, i.e. his body, mind, talent, wealth, family, house etc. in the use and service of his Lord and he is ever ready to renounce his family, prestige, wealthpleasures, spouse, kingdom etc. for the sake of his Lord³¹
- viii) Doubtless and fearless shall I remain, for I do not have any fear of being ditched in (or getting lost in) *Indra-loka* (*svarga*), *Brahma-loka* (*Satya-loka*) or any other celestial region on the way to the highest abode of God³². I, now, am cocksure of the highest accomplishment by the grace of God. I am resolutely convinced that, there is nothing more blissful and blessed than my God, Who alone is the bestower of the supreme happiness.

For a *Śaraṇāgata-dāsa*, it is imperative to develop the understanding and attitude that he is not a perishable body but indestructible pure atman, and he does not have the least craving to enjoy things meant for his God, and he does not act contrary to the wish and liking of his God, and he is pleased by those things alone that please his God, and he remains cheerful both in conditions of honour and insult, and hence neither elated or depressed and he willfully submits and enslaves himself to his Guru and serves all co-

farer devotees with utter humility and very low profile.³³ Such a seeker who has sought refuge in Him is untouched and uncontaminated by the *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, says *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*.³⁴

When *Guru*, the vehicle of God's full-fledged divinity in him, is pleased by the consistent duty-abidingness and motiveless-ceaseless service unto God and His devotees of the *Śaraṇāgata*, God Who observes the conduct of *śaraṇāgata* through the *Guru* gets pleased and showers His grace in an illimitable measure, dispels his ignorance and vices and uplifts him to the highest abode in His eternal service.

GLORY OF ŚARAṆĀGATĪ

A man bereft of *Vedic-Śāstrīk* knowledge, education, wealth, power, support, virtues and any other qualification also have place and scope in the path of *prapatti*; and seeking it, one becomes as reverable as a saint of high order. Therefore, a man however mean (*pāmara*) and fallen and forlorn (*patita*) may be, but if he submits himself totally at the feet of God or the *Guru* (God-possessed saint), he too becomes eligible for final release on par with others, i.e. eligible seekers of God.³⁵ Resignation with firm faith at the feet of God is the best means, therefore, to please God, earn His grace and thereby freedom from *saṁsāra* forever. "Therefore, whatever way one surrenders, be it with blind rush like a dullard (*mūḍhatvena*), or be it out of self-interest (*svārthika*) or be it with unshakable firm faith (*vaiśvāsanika*) or be it with right knowledge and understanding of God's Glory (*jñānika*), but it has to be a total submission without any lacuna in it". The *Guru-paricaryā* and *satsaṅga* of the *Guru*, slowly gives the right knowledge and right approach, and thus, brings about change in the attitude of *śaraṇāgata*, which ultimately becomes totally motiveless and uncontaminated.

The fisherman standing in the pond-water spreads his fishing net around. The fishes who remain clung around his feet get saved, while those who go astray get trapped in the net to doom. *Śaraṇāgati*

assures security on this popular principle. In *Bhāgavata*³⁶, the Lord says: “I account a very low-born dog-eater who has dedicated himself in thought, speech, action, wealth and life itself to the Lord is far worthier than twelve virtue endowed Brahmin who has turned his face away from the *bhakti* of the Lotus feet of Lord Hari.”

And in *Bhāgavata*³⁷ the Lord says: “I do not covet anything, neither Myself nor My Consort Śrī, but covet only My devotees who having renounced everything sought Me alone as their Protector.” The *Mahābhārata*³⁸ reiterates: “Those who seek refuge in God are never deluded and the Lord Janārdana redeems them from most dreading fear of hell”. The *Gītā* too says – “they attain supreme peace and eternal abode.”³⁹

Conclusion:

Āśrayaṇa or *Śaraṇāgati* is the starting point and the culmination of all efforts. *Āśrayaṇa* plays its role throughout until the whole *sādhana* with all imperatives and requirements is over and *mokṣa* is attained. All our acts and endeavours of spiritual *sādhana*, without *Śaraṇāgati* are like a misfire, an unproductive aimless shooting in the vast sky, hitting no specific target. The attainment of final emancipation and thereby disentanglement from cycles of birth and death remains an unaccomplishable ideal without *Śaraṇāgati*.

Notes and References

- ¹ *Vacanāmṛtam* (Vaç) of Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa, Vartāl Section – 5, *Gaḍhaḍa* Middle section – 9 and 17.
- ² *Sarvamaṅgalanāmāvalī* (incorporated in *Satsaṅgijivana*) by Śātānandamuni, 369.
- ³ *Ibid.* 370 and also *Janamaṅgalanāmāvalī* – 82.
- ⁴ *Ibid.* 352.
- ⁵ *Bhāgavata*-3.9.6.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* 1.1.14.
- ⁷ *Op. Cit.* *Sarvamaṅgalanāmāvalī*- 576.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* 588.
- ⁹ *Bhāgavata*-10.2.33.

- ¹⁰ *Bhāgavata*-3.7.14 and also *Bhaktacintāmaṇi* by Sadguru Nīṣkulānanda Svāmi. 6.28.29.
- ¹¹ Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa's *Śikṣāpatrī* – 212.
- ¹² *Bhāgavata* – 9.4.65.
- ¹³ *Mahābhārata* – *Bhīṣmaparvan* 9.4.65.
- ¹⁴ *Harivākyasudhāsindhu* of Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa – 210.9
also see *Vac. Varṭal* Section 14 and 10.
- ¹⁵ *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* First Section – 14 and 60.
- ¹⁶ *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* Middle Section – 7.
- ¹⁷ *Bhāgavata*-11.26.33:
*Annam hi prāṇinām prāṇa ārtānām śaraṇam tvaham/
Dharmo vittam nṛṇām pretya santo'rvāg bibhyato'raṇam//*
- ¹⁸ *Muṇḍ. Up.* 2.12, *Śvetā. Up.* – 6.23, *Bhāgavata*-11.3.21 and 11.10.5.
- ¹⁹ *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* Last Section – 16 and *Gaḍhaḍā* Middle Section-19.
- ²⁰ *Vac. SS* – 17 and *GMS*-67.
- ²¹ *Vac. GLS* – 28.
- ²² *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* Middle Section – 62.
- ²³ *Satsaṅgijīvanam* – 4.46.27.
- ²⁴ *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* First Section – 72, also see *HVSS* – 72/7 and *GMS*-38 and *GLS*-33.
- ²⁵ *Satsaṅgijīvanam* -
- ²⁶ *Vac. Varṭal* Section – 5 *Gaḍhaḍā* Middle Section – 9 and 17,
Gaḍhaḍā Last Section – 36.
- ²⁷ *Vac. Varṭal* Section 5.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* and also *Kāriyāṇi* Section – 11.
- ³⁰ *Vāc. Gaḍhaḍā* Middle Section-62 and *Loya* Section – 3, *Kāriyāṇi* Section – 11 also see *Bhāgavata* – 3.25.23.
- ³¹ *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* Middle Section – 62. .
- ³² *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* Last Section – 7.
- ³³ *Vac. Gaḍhaḍā* First Section – 14, 58, 74, 78.
- ³⁴ *Bhāgavata* -1.11.38.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.* 66. .
- ³⁶ *Bhāgavata*-11.14.14; 11.14.21.
- ³⁷ *Bhāgavata*-9.4.64-65.
- ³⁸ *Mahābhārata Bhīṣmaparvan*.
- ³⁹ *Gūā* -18.64.

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Śaraṇāgati in Śaivism of *Nāyanmārs*

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The period in Tamil Nadu from 2nd Century up to 575 AD was very crucial on account of the Prākṛit speaking Kalabhra rulers patronizing Jainism and persecuting and suppressing the Vedic cults of India. However, the ancient Brāhmanic cults somehow survived. Their power overthrown by the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas gave way for the upcoming of two major religions viz. *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism* and the *Bhakti* movement of *Āḷvārs* and *Nāyanmārs* respectively.

The impact of deep-rooted Kalabhras' state religion i.e. Jainism existed for some more time.¹ Hence, the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I (580-630 AD) and Pāṇḍya ruler remained Jains in the early age. The credit of bringing them to the Brāhmanic cult goes to the *Bhakti* movement of *Śaiva* saints known as *Nāyanmārs*.

Nāyanmārs are 63 in number, including an important female hymnist saint viz. Kāraikkāl Ammaiyār. Their life history is written in a treatise called *Periya Purāṇam* in Tamil authored by Cekkīlār in c.1140 AD, a contemporary of the Chola ruler Kulottunga II.²

The three hymnist *Nāyanmārs* generally known as '*Mūvar*' (trinity) are Appar, Sundarar and Tirunāvukkaracar. A large collection of their hymns were compiled in the name of '*Tevaram*' by the saint Nambiyāṇḍār Nambi patronized by the Chola ruler Rājarāja I, the great. Another saint hymnist namely Māṇikkavācakar had been included in the group hence, they are known collectively as '*Nālvar*' (four). Contribution of these four *Nāyanmārs* to *Bhakti* literature of *Śaivism* as well as the rise of *Śaiva* cult is remarkable. It is to be noted that these *Nāyanmārs*, like the *Āḷvārs*, were the root cause of dispelling the deep-rooted Jainism in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, these *Nāyanmārs* played an important role against the Kālāmukha-Māheśvara cult that just had started penetrating into Tamil Nadu.³

Though these could not stop this, their hymns had an impact on Śaivism which got modified to tune with *bhakti*-oriented Śaivism.

The concept / philosophy of these *Nāyaṇmārs* is almost equal to the *Ālvārs* of *Vaiṣṇavism* excepting the Prime Deity being Śiva in the former and Viṣṇu in the latter. It was the time no much rivalry existed between these two major religions possibly perhaps in order to eradicate jointly the deep-rooted Jainism and Teravada Buddhism in South India.

The treatises of the *Nāyaṇmārs* are called '*Tirumuṟai*'. Māṇikkavācakar, who converted the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I from Jainism to his family cult i.e. Brāhmaṇism, authored a work called *Tiruvācakam*. Tirunāvukkaracar (Appar), who was a Jain in early life and brought back to Śaivism by his sister, is the author of one of the *Tevāram* collection. Other two contributors of *Tevāram* hymns are Tiruñānasambandhar (Sambandhar) and Sundarar (Ārūrār), who converted the Pāṇḍyan king to Śaivism.

The *Tevāram* collection and Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* rendered in Tamil language reflect the ideology of *Siddhānta Śaivism* of Śaiva Āgamic literature found in Sanskrit in 28 main treatises and a number of sub-treatises. The nature of the Supreme One i.e. Śiva and the means of attaining His world (*loka*) and other matters are almost same in both the groups i.e. Śaiva Āgamas and *Tevāram* collections. The *Nāyaṇmārs* had contributed to Śaiva tradition the same way the *Ālvārs* to *Vaiṣṇavism*.

The terms '*aṭaital*' (reaching) and '*parrutal*' (surrender) are used to mean *śaraṇāgati* which means the soul should reach the holy feet or surrender to the same. *Śaraṇāgati* is prescribed as the best means to attain Śiva-loka, insist the hymns of *Nāyaṇmārs*. They speak of the quality of the *śaraṇya* (Supreme One i.e. Śiva), *śaraṇāgata* and the purpose of varieties of *śaraṇāgati*.

The *Nāyaṇmārs* describe the mercy of the Lord Śiva and provide a number of *Purāṇic* legends - destruction of Yama for the sake of Mārkaṇḍeya, consumption of poison at the time of *Kūrma-*

avatāra of Viṣṇu, destruction of Tripura (three worlds) on request of the deities, bestowing Pāsupata-astra to Arjuna, descent of Gaṅgā on the earth on request of Bhagīratha and His grace on Rāvaṇa who tried to move the mountain where Śiva resides are casually cited in the hymns to praise the nature of Śiva, who paid attention to the *śaraṇāgata* in above all.

The *Nāyaṇmārs* uniformly advocate the means for the liberation of the soul from bondages in this world. According to them, *śaraṇāgati* is the only path for the same. The Lord Śiva, accompanied with Umā or Pārvatī, is alone the *upāya* (goal) and *upeya* (means). The *Nāyaṇmārs* prescribe the form of Śiva whose half part of body is shared by Umā (*Umai oru paṅkan* or *Ardhanārīśvara*) rather than any form of Śiva accompanied with Umā. This strengthens the view of *śakta* (capable) and *śakti* (energy / power) obviously the *guṇa-guṇi* concept.

Śaraṇāgati does not require any qualifications like good character, practice of penances and vows and even matured knowledge of all arts (*kalās*) but the sincere devotion (*bhakti*) and non-approach of any other deity (*ananyagatitva*) and firm faith.⁴ *Śaraṇāgati* is in two ways i.e. verbal (*vācika* = *collutal*) and physical (*kāyika* = *iyal*). When the *jīva* sincerely utters the name of the Lord Śiva, the latter at once Himself enters into the mind of the *jīva* and showers the grace on him.⁵ The *kāyika śaraṇāgati* is to render service to the Lord Śiva and his devotees, after once *jīva* mentally sought refuge in the Lord.⁶

When a *jīva* realizes his helplessness, sinful acts, ignorance and impure mind, generally collectively known as *kārpaṇya*, he becomes eligible for *śaraṇāgati* if he is ready to surrender to the Lord whole-heartedly and devotedly.⁷ Sundarar states, “My father, mother and others do not support me even a bit; I am born in the illusory world, and dead and reached you, I don’t think of others”.⁸

The *jīva*, even without any form of knowledge, is eligible for *śaraṇāgati* if he, with melted mind with sincere devotion,

approaches / surrenders, by both words and behaviour, to the Lord Śiva without seeking refuge in any other deity.⁹ Such *śaraṇāgata* should consider himself as servant (*dāsa*) and slave (*aṭimai*) loyal like a dog to his master and (*nāyen*) also to His followers.¹⁰

After having taken refuge in the Lord, the *jīva* is restricted to many rules and regulations till the end of his life for, the liberation is only after completing the life i.e. after death.¹¹ *Accappattu* in *Tiruvācakam*¹² details as to whom the *śaraṇāgata* has to avoid. He says even looking at the men with following characters are fearful than any other dangerous creatures / things in the world - a) one who thinks of other deities and does not approach the Lord Śiva b) one who does not affectionately praise the Lord Śiva and experience the nectar-like life c) one who does not get his heart melted by singing the glory of the Lord Śiva, with tears in the eyes d) one who does not adorn his body with the white sacred ashes (*Veṇṇīru* = *bhasman*) e) one who does not worship the holy feet of the Lord Śiva with varieties of flowers f) one who is ignorant without resorting to the Lord Śiva and g) one who is afraid / reluctant even to touch the devotees of the Lord Śiva.

Sundarar, in the hymn on *Tiru Nākaikkāroṇam*, states that the Lord enters voluntarily into the mind of the *jīva* caught in the fetters of margosa-like *karma* and graces the soul to experience the sugarcane-like bliss of the Lord.¹³ The *śaraṇāgata* is freed from the cycle of births and deaths in the form of ocean of *Samsāra*.¹⁴ The lord resides in the minds of the ones who full-heartedly think and praise Him and He releases them from all the fetters of the *karmas*, which are the worst.¹⁵ The lord uproots the fetters of the *karmas* of those who surrender to Him.¹⁶

Śaraṇāgati requires a suitable *śaraṇya* (refuge). The *jīva* is in a position to choose the refuge who is the ultimate rescuer from all sorts of bondages. Such refuge is the Supreme One i.e. Lord Śiva accompanied with Umā or Pārvatī. All the *Nāyanmārs* emphasize that *śaraṇāgati* becomes fruitful when the *jīva* surrenders to the Divine

Couple i.e. Lord Śiva and Umā. He showers His grace on all without any hesitation / reluctance.¹⁷ He is good to who come near Him, and who are attached to Him, who praise Him and who surrendered to Him.¹⁸

The *śaraṇya* is the medicine and nectar capable of uprooting even the strongest *karmas* to those who worship or circumambulate Him¹⁹ where the service is emphasized both by words (*vācika*) and body (*kāyika*). Here the medicine is for the disease (*noy*) is the attachment to parents, wife, children and relatives. The Lord releases the *jīva* from also the bondages of *karma* accumulated for a long time (*tol vinai = sañcīta-karma*).²⁰

The nature of the *śaraṇya* is to accept and consider even the flaws of the *jīvas* as good/ enjoyable (*bhogyā*) to Him for, the *jīvas* can not be free from any such activities due to their nature of being so.²¹ Therefore, probably, as Sundarar states, the evil activities of the *śaraṇāgata* increases on account of this nature of the Lord.²²

The spontaneous and unconditional grace of the Lord Śiva, says Māṇikkavācakar, is greater than the mother who breastfeeds the baby affectionately and carefully.²³ The Grace of the Lord on a *jīva* and offering *mukti* (= *mokṣa*) are also His own decision.²⁴ The analogy of placing a dog in the palanquin is noteworthy here. Even the *jīva* does not have affection / sincerity, the Lord blesses him if he utters / calls His name.²⁵ Moreover, the Lord takes it sincere and true even the *jīva* praise him without sincerity, in spite He knows the truth.²⁶

Not only the *jīva* but also the Lord is waiting for the moment to rescue the *jīvas* as soon as they surrender with or without intention. The grace of the Lord is unconditional and affectionate and He Himself approaches the *jīva* suffering due to the *karmas*. Māṇikkavācakar beautifully explains the activities of the Lord. First of all, he just attracts the *jīva* whose mind is very hard like the iron; He makes the heart to melt; He enables the *jīva* to experience the sugarcane-like bliss and, at last, He shows His feet to the *śaraṇāgata*

in order to get rid of the fetters of *karma* as well as the cycle of birth and death.²⁷

The nature of the *jīva* is to experience only the mean enjoyment with whatever available in the world like women, wealth, etc., to consider all perishable and untruthful as imperishable and true and follow whatever prohibited and, in such cycle of *karmas*, the *jīva* is much attached and it is reluctant to come out of this in spite of the grace of the God showered on him.²⁸ Therefore, the burden of the Supreme one increases every moment.

The responsibility of the Lord Śiva increases as soon as the *jīva* surrenders to him. He is in a position to take care that the *śaraṇāgata* does not once again enter into the evil and unfavourable acts. If the *śaraṇāgata* gets worse in his activities / behaviour and experiences all sorts of pains, the Lord Śiva is to be blamed for, He has not fulfilled His promise to the *śaraṇāgata*.²⁹ and this is a condition to the Lord but the *śaraṇāgati* is unconditional on the part of the *śaraṇāgata*. Therefore, the Supreme Lord, in order to refrain the *śaraṇāgata*, creates such situation so that it is impossible to leave Him after communion with Him. It does not mean that the *śaraṇāgata* can do anything for, he is not supposed to have any sort of independence.

The *śaraṇāgati* results in union of the Supreme One in His highest Abode (Śiva-pada),³⁰ which is even beyond the thought of the *śaraṇāgata* where he is to experience highest bliss and to render service to the Lord, being behind him everywhere, as a slave which confirms his dependence on the God alone.³¹ The Lord offers what the *jīva* requires in this world both wealth and wisdom, He forgives the flaws, He enables the *śaraṇāgata* to do only the flawless deeds / activities.³² As far as the worldly result (*laukika*) is concerned, the *śaraṇāgata* gets the status in the society so that no man abuses him for, he is the property of the Lord Śiva.³³

Notes and References

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- 2 *op. cit.*, p.97.
- 3 K.V. Soundara Rajan, *Rock-cut Temple Styles*, p.5.
- 4 Sundarar, VII.1.4; 7.21. *Tiruvācakam*, *Tiruvecaṟavu*, 5; *Tiruvācakam*, *Ānandamālai*, 3.
- 5 *Tiruvācakam*, *Tiruvecaṟavu*, 10.
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- 7 Sundarar, VII.21.4; VII.24.3; 11.48.1; V11.70.6; VII.96.9; *Tiruvācakam*, *Aṭaikkalap Pattu*, 1-10.
- 8 Sundarar, VII.24.3.
- 9 *Tiruvācakam*, *Tiruvecaṟavu*, 5.
- 10 Sundarar, VII.24.4; *Tiruvācakam*, *Ānandamālai*, 5.
- 11 *Tiruvācakam*, *Cettilāp Pattu*, 1.
- 12 *Tiruvācakam*, *Accappattu*, 1-10.
- 13 Sundarar, V11.46.2; *Tiruvācakam*, *Piṭṭapattu*, 6.
- 14 *Tiruvācakam*, *Tirutṭāṇokkam*, 2; *Tiruvācakam*, *Tiruppāṇṭippatikam*, 9.
- 15 Sundarar, VII.52.8; VII.61.8; VII.68.2.
- 16 Sundarar, VII.11.1.
- 17 Sundarar, VII.53.4.
- 18 Sundarar, VII.14.9.
- 19 Sundarar VII.75.9; *Tiruvācakam*, *Ānandamālai*, 2.
- 20 Sundarar, VII.12.9.
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- 22 Sundarar, V11.69.6.
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- 24 *Tiruvācakam*, *Accop patikam*, 1-10.
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- 26 Sundarar, VII.41.7.

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28 Sundarar, VII.8.7; V11.59.2; VII.69.6; *Tiruvācakam*, *Accop patikam*, 2-4; *Tiruvācakam*, *Aṭaikkalappattu*, 9.

29 *Tiruvācakam*, *Ānandamālai*, 4.

30 *Tiruvācakam*, *Pitittapattu*, 3.

31 Sambandhar, I.59.2; *Tiruvācakam*, *Ānandamālai*, 2; *Tiruvācakam*, *Koyil Mūtta Tiruppatikam*, 2.

32 Sundarar, VII.59.1.

33 *Tiruvācakam*, *Koyil Mūtta Tiruppatikam*, 6.

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Śaraṇāgati in Virāṣaiva Tradition of Basaveśvara

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The orientation of religious endeavor is directed by a vague feeling and faith in a divine power at the start of the struggle between the raw impulses of the body-mind and what he can be when these impulses have reached the highest pitch of discipline. Its main principle is to adopt some human relation between man and the Divine Being by which through the ever intense flowing of the heart's emotions towards him, the human soul may yet be wedded to and grow into union with him, in a passion of divine love. Every feeling that can make the heart ready for this ecstasy, the religious experience admits, everything that detracts from it must increasingly drop away as the strong union of love becomes closer and more perfect. It is not then the giving of the thing asked for that matters, but the relation itself the contact of man's life with God, the conscious interchange. In spiritual matters and the seeking of spiritual gains, this conscious relation is a great power, it is a much greater power than our own entirely self-reliant struggle and effort and it brings a fuller spiritual growth and experience.

According to Basaveśvara, God comes into the experience of the religious aspirant in proportion to the purity of inner and outer life and the intensity of his effort seeking union with God. Basaveśvara expressed it in his *ṣaṭsthala* experience. *Ṣaṭsthala* theory is an attempt to render the genetic development of ever-deepening and ever-widening religious experience, as a process of self-fulfillment of man and God in and through their interplay culminating in integral self-perfection or active union with each other, best described as *līṅgāṅga sāmārasya*. The actuality of this concrete religious experience is urged onward and inward by the spontaneity of the individual psychic eros and the divine eros, which by their

own creativity ever enter into new phase of itself. It is by a converse process that each, man and God, comes into closer and closer relation with the other culminating in *lingāṅga sāmāsyā* , where each is drowned in the other, each equally actively enjoying the companionship. In this concept of religion, the process of union of both man and God, is distinguished as taking place in the six-phase manner.

The soul in the intensity of its preparation and realization feels the divine impulse and attraction in it. The natural response to this lure of God is a sense of adoration on the part of nascent soul. The greater the power of this lure, the greater this adoration takes the form of worship. Such worship may assume an external form of ceremonial worship. The soul is inspired by the power of God - an expression of inward grace in external form. When this adoration becomes profound, there is an increasing consecration of the being to the divine who is adored. And one element of this consecration must be self-purifying so as to become fit for the divine contact, or for the entrance of the divine into the temple of our inner being, or for his self-revelation in the shrine of the heart. This purging may be ethical in its character. It culminates in a sort of liberation by likeness of the divine, a liberation from our lower nature and a change into the divine nature. The *bhakta* (aspirant) offers up his life and all that he has and all that he does to the divine. By this comes the complete active consecration of both the inner and outer life, the unmutilated self-giving. In this phase of religious development, the aspirant entrusts himself totally to God. Basaveçvara says:

“O Father Linga, let me live /
Exempt from falsehood, and exempt /
From all allurements of this world, /
Exempt from every harlotry?

Even for an instant let me be/In Thy Śaraṇas' fellowship"

Let me not see aught else, for, Lord / Kūḍala Saṅgama, I have lost My way!" ¹ This is Śaraṇāgati or total surrender. This can be achieved through kāyaka or honest physical works essential for the life of the individual and the society.

That is why there is the well-known saying, *kāyakave kailāsa* or work is worship. This worship is the result of the overflow of intense admiration and feelings of reverence and submission to the luring action of God. The Godhead we adore and embrace becomes the originating power that acts' in us. Our whole being is put into tune with it and it is made the very self of our being. As Basaveśvara says:

"Make of my body, Lord, the pole;

Make of my head, the gourd;

Make of my nerves the wires, O Lord, /

And of my fingers the plectrum make;

Intone Thy two-and-thirty notes;

Press my heart and play, /O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord !" ²

It is a living of man in the divine and a divine living of the spirit in humanity and will therefore, be the whole object of an integral experience of self-perfection. It is an ineffable union involving the play of the love and the delight.

It is obvious that whatever exists - other souls, world, God - can only be known when they are given as data in the subjective experiencing of the growing individual. This nascent individual has to exercise his freedom of choice cautiously so that virtuous merit or their opposites are related in this growing experience. Basaveçvara expresses this as follows:

"Mark you, virtue and sin / Are your own choice;

To say 'Sir 'is heaven; /To say 'you there?' is Hell ..

O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord, / In saying ' God', and 'Saint"

And 'bless you. Master' - here / Is Kailāsa " ³

God's dispensation of value or disvalue, according to Basaveśvara, operates according to the law enunciated in another saying:

“What means the worship of a man / Whose body is not pure?
 What means this fancy that the Lord / Is not munificent?
 The mind bears witness to the mind: / Is Father Linga not
 enough? As our mind is, so Thy glory is:
 This never fails, O Kūdala Saṅgama Lord ⁴

If you violate this law, you are your own prosecutor, attorney, and judge. Accordingly, Basaveśvara points out that the self has to grow into ripeness of rich complexity and wholeness:

“Devotion was verily the Ground on which the Preceptor sprouted into the leaf called God. And on that leaf there blossomed the power of Reason, which grew into the Nut of Right conduct. It, then ripened itself into Fullness of Personality (in its own course) when this ripened fruit of Personality was about to fall, being detached from its stalk, the Lord of Unity as the Meeting of Rivers (of life) grabbed at it crying - ‘ I need it?’”⁵

In Basaveśvara, the dynamic relations of the nascent soul and God pass into the different phases of enriched growth, cumulatively and creatively in the mutual entry of each into the other. Thus man and God are growing to serve and this serving is to grow by sharing and realizing through each other. The goal is the realization of ever-widening and ever-deepening labyrinthine layers of perfection of man and God like the two polar ends of a worm in mutual requirement. The final consummation of this process of religious endeavor is the absorption of each into the other which Basaveśvara best describes as *lingāṅga Sāmarasya*. In these various phases of religious development the aspirant comes to feel that this art and theory of the yearning of heart's love for active union with God is a matter for the witness of one's own visceral experience and not for ostentatious exhibition outside. As Basaveśvara says:

“The mind bears witness to the taste / At touch of tongue,
 will it not do, good Sir?

Does the bud blow / At the florist's behest? / Is it service. Sir, to
 explain / The Agamas to another man? Is it service. Sir, to explain /

The heart's art of love wherewith / One joins our Kūdala
Saṅgama?"⁶

and

"Can there be a country couplement/Without some vulgar
words?

Could you say that a gentle wife / Is just like that?

Could you say that a pious love / Is just like that?

Could one's heart's love, / O Kūdala Saṅgama Lord,

Be uttered to the world?"⁷

This spiritual religion is the ultimate living concern for inner integrity in the dynamic self-development of man's integral perfection of character. This task cannot be undertaken by anyone who is not prepared for the rigors, which it imposes. That is why even a great aspirant like Basaveśvara is forced to say, spiritual life is only for the courageous heroes of the spirit and not for the worldly weaklings who are ready to die for the desires of flesh and physical mind. It is not a task to be undertaken by the so-called practical minded heroes of this world. Basaveśvara says, "the cowards of this world are heroes of the other world.. .."⁸

The rigors of religious life make the aspirant say:

"You cannot do / What goes for piety:

It cuts through like a saw / Going and coming?

Touch with your hand / A monstrous snake:

It will surely bite, / O Lord Kūdala Saṅgama!"⁹

A comfort hunting, unwilling, easygoing man of the world can hardly dare to undertake or climb the mountainous path of religions. That is why Basaveśvara says:

"A dog borne on the shoulders: how can it catch

A rabbit. Lord? / A warrior impotent to throw a spear.

He ought to blush / At his unfounded boastfulness!

How can I be a devotee, / O Kūdala Saṅgama Lord?"¹⁰

But a mere impotent wishing not ready for the rigors of discipline can hardly attain to that peace which surpasseth understanding.

Heart-searching aspirants even wonder as to whether spontaneous religious sensibility may not be a gift from above and resign themselves to the plight of an utterly sincere struggling endeavor until it prepares them to make fit and wait for God's compassionate grace. The effectiveness of this religion depends upon the straightforward, sincere, honest loving devotion so central to it. As Basaveśvara says:

“Meeting a man of the world, / I jest and sing;
Meeting a dialectic man, / I jest and sing;
Spontaneous good is not / In me, O Lord;
Neither, O Father, real piety, / Had I a singleness of heart,
Why should you not, O Lord / Kūdala Saṅgama,
Have pity on me?”¹¹

It must be obvious that the core of religion consists of total sincerity or pure devotion completely dedicated to the highest ideal of union with God. Exercising his free choice in doing the best that he can, man comes to feel that his efforts have not enabled him to realize his true goal and destiny, and therefore turns to powers other and greater than himself by a total surrender which entrusts his entire destiny to God. The aspirant has tenaciously done the total surrender, he is freed once for all and becomes an instrument in the hands of God. This is *Śaraṇāgati*, characteristic of *prapanna* worthy of God and continues to discharge obligations in this world, here and now, in obedience to God.

This concept of *śaraṇāgati* must construe the proper role of man, God and the world maintaining the harmonious balance having regard to the nature and relation of each to the other. The FIRST requisite is that the self must be dynamic and growing, making its own choice morally responsible for its activities. Accordingly, Basaveśvara says:

“Destruction's weed is born / In a field of growing corn:
It clouds my understanding, / It lulls my brain asleep;
O Father Liṅga, pluck / This weed, my vice,

That my shoot burst again / And I may grow, O Lend
Kūḍala Saṅgama!"¹²

And

"Devotion was verily the Ground on which the Preceptor sprouted into the leaf called God. And on that leaf there blossomed the power of Reason, which grew into the Nut of Right conduct. It, then ripened itself into Fullness of Personality (in its own course) when his ripened fruit of Personality was about to fall, being detached from its stalk, the Lord of Unity as the Meeting of Rivers (of life) grabbed it it crying – 'I need it!'"¹³

This growth of the self is guided by its choice of good or bad involving, as it does, freedom and responsibility' for making or narrating its religious development culminating in the goal of *liṅgāṅga sāmārasya*. Basaveśvara says:

"Mark you, virtue and sin / Are your own choice;
To say 'Sir' is heaven;/To say "you there?" is Hell..
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord, / In saying 'God' and 'Saint'
And 'bless you. Master' - here / Is Kailāsa?"¹⁴

and

"Whenever you strike, the stroke's in hand;
Whenever you curse, the curse's in hand.. -
Let be whatever past life was: /
Today's enjoyment is in hand!
O Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord, /
The fruit of your worship is in hand!"¹⁵

Secondly, self's helplessness in conquering over-whelmingly powerful impulses and temptations makes him turn to the company of Śaraṇas and God's grace thus:

“O Father Linga, let me live / Exempt from falsehood, and
exempt

From all allurements of this world, / Exempt from every
harlotry!

Even for an instant let me be/In Thy Sārāṇas’ fellowship!

Let me not see aught else; for, Lord / Kūḍala Saṅgama, I have
lost

My way!”¹⁶

Even with the proper exercise of the choice and the aid of the *śaraṇas* in his spiritual task the aspirant realizes the inadequacy of his effort and feels that the best way is to entrust himself totally surrendering himself to God’s grace. Now what can be the role of God in this *śaraṇāgati*? Some have said that it is entirely God who can look after his (man’s/soul’s) well-being here and hereafter but others have said that in such a case how is it that some suffer and others are happy in many different ways in different walks of life. God will be liable to the charge of favoring whom he likes and disfavoring those that he does not like. But no man of religion attributes *vaiṣaṃya* and *nairghṛaṇya* to God. And, yet God’s ways to man have to be accounted for. What must be the role of God in relation to the soul, which has totally surrendered (*Śaraṇāgati*) itself to God. Here is the delicate task of reason harmonizing individual’s inherent freedom with God’s power to direct the course of devotees’ spiritual endeavor. If God does everything then individual’s freedom and responsibility is taken away and God will have to be responsible for every detail of man’s life including good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the sacred and the profane. This is an undesirable consequence. If, on the other hand, the individual soul can make or mar its final destiny then God becomes irrelevant to man. Accordingly, Basaveśvara says:

“The wife unloving of her mate, / The *bhakta* who has no
faith

In Liṅga - O great God! /It is the same

Whether they are or no! /O Kūḍala Saṅgama, it's like
Loosing a calf that will not suck / To a cow that will not
yield her milk!¹⁷

In my opinion, A.N. Whitehead's suggestion seems more adequate than most other alternatives: "What metaphysics requires is a solution exhibiting the plurality of individuals as consistent with the Unity of the Universe, and a solution which exhibits the World (man) as requiring its union with God, and God as requiring his union with the World. Sound doctrine also requires an understanding of how the Ideals in God's nature, by the reason of their status in his nature, are there persuasive elements in the creative advance. Plato grounded these derivations from God upon his will; whereas metaphysics requires that the relationship of God to the world should lie beyond the accidents of will, and that they be founded upon the necessities of the nature of God and the nature of the World."¹⁸. Accordingly Basaveśvara holds that God's lure attracts the soul by holding ideals before the soul and it is left to the choice of the soul to accept and submit its course of destiny to God. Akkamahadevi expresses this as follows:

"The hell of knowing Thee / Is Liberation, Sir,
But Liberation is indeed a hell / For one who knows Thee
not
The joy that does not please Thee, Sir,
Is sorrow, but the pain that pleases Thee / Is joy supreme.
O Cenna Mallikāṛjuna Lord, for me
The bonds Thou tiest when Thou / Would 'st keep me still,
Are freedom from all bonds!"¹⁹

Basaveśvara says that the soul by its own free will entrusts itself to God:

"I call upon Thee, but Thou know'st me not;
I drudge for Thee: Thou see'st me not...
How can I live. Lord, how survive?

Thou only, Kūḍala Saṅgama Lord,
Art to me life, art ground and goal?"²⁰

and

"Thine are my weal and woe; / My loss and gain are thine?
Thine too my honor and shame: / O Lord Kūḍala

Saṅgama,

How can the creeper feel the weight / Of its own fruit?"²¹ Here the aspirant makes a-whole-hearted and whole-minded surrender to God and all the consequences, which come in its train. Basaveçvara's concept of *Çaraëägati* is therefore, of ourselves, yet not of ourselves. It is not of ourselves in so far as it is the product of the quickening activity of the spirit of God; it is of ourselves in so far as it is the rational, willing and loving response of our whole personality to the power of God.

THIRDLY, just as soul's nature is conceived dynamically as in the process of growth, so also God's nature must be conceived dynamically if relations are to be meaningful. This is so because relations must pass into and affect the terms thus related. Otherwise, the terms will be independent substances not requiring each other. Therefore, there is a necessity that God and soul should stand in mutual requirement (require each other). The soul stands in need of direction, which by itself it cannot provide. If God is absolutely and statically perfect, there will be no need on his part to have any commerce with the world. Religion and prayer would be a meaningless activity. Therefore, God must be conceived in relational terms. In another way also, God will be necessary for the world and the world will be necessary for God's fulfillment of his purpose through man (world). As Basaveçvara says:

".... Both persons - form and formlessness,
If now you spurn the one and hold the other,

That is itself a lack in you:
Mark that, Prabhu: Kūdala Saṅgama!" 22

The *nirākāra* aspect of God functions to hold before the soul the ideals persuading or impelling the soul to become what it ought to be, depending upon what it has been. The soul realizing the ideals it chooses achieves value by growing into a ripened fruit of personality, which God grabs as in some degree the fulfillment of purpose. This is how God needs the world constituting the growing actuality or His *sākāra* aspect.

What will be the status of the individual soul thus received into the consequent nature or *sākāra* aspect of God? Basaveçvara's answer is that, in the end, though there is no end, soul and God grow together, enjoy together in happiness by being in mutually absorbed, in the manner of a river entering into river:

"What boots in your Līṅga worshipping
Unless you have a common love,
A common art, a common joy?
What boots your Līṅga-worshipping
Unless, by worship of Lord Kūdala Saṅgama.
You merge in Him as stream in stream?" 23

And

"I was greater than the greatest that there is
In the grand Absolute, sublimely great.
How can I tell the way the word /
That I'm within the lofty light
Of Lord Kūdala Saṅgama / Was turned to silentness?" 24

Thus, the destiny of the individual soul is a continued existence ever being mutually enriched into ever-deepening and ever-widening dynamic perfection.

Notes and References

- 1 *Vacanas of Basavanna* (V.B.), 60.
- 2 *Ibid.* 498.
- 3 *Ibid.* 240.
- 4 *Ibid.* 646.
- 5 *Ibid.* 527.
- 6 *Ibid.* 848.
- 7 *Ibid.* 825.
- 8 *Ibid.* 901.
- 9 *Ibid.* 212.
- 10 *Ibid.* 304.
- 11 *Ibid.* 286.
- 12 *Ibid.* 50.
- 13 *Ibid.* 527.
- 14 *Ibid.* 240.
- 15 *Ibid.* 170.
- 16 *Ibid.* 60.
- 17 *Ibid.* 109.
- 18 Whitehead, A-N, *Adventures of Ideas*, Cambridge University Press, 1964. p. 171-172.
- 19 *Vacanas of Akkamahādevi*, 190.
- 20 V.B. 479.
- 21 *Ibid.* 60.
- 22 *Ibid.* 26, p. 435.
- 23 *Ibid.* 929.
- 24 V.B. 956.

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1. Menezes, L.M.A. & Aagadi, S.M. (Translators), *Vacanas of Basavanna*, [V.B] Annana Balaga: Sirigere (Karnataka). 1967.
2. Menezes, L.M.A. & Aagadi, S.M. (Translators), *Vacanas of Akkamahādevi*, [V.A.]. Shri Manohar Appasaheb Adke: Dharwad. 1973.
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Śaraṇāgati in Śākta Sampradāya

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Śakti literally means power, the power of Supreme Brahman metaphysically, but theistically *Śakti* is the Divine Mother. *Śāktism* refers to the cult of worshipping *Śakti*: the Divine Power in the Goddess form. This Divine Power manifests as '*vimarśa*' the 'I-consciousness' and '*parāmarśa*' the 'This consciousness'.¹ *Śāktism*, like *pratyabhijñā* school of Śaivism, conceives *Śakti* in the nature of *vimarśa* and *parāmarśa*. *Śāktism*, is a realistic philosophy as it regards the selves and the universe to be real and in the nature of *Śakti*.² The universe is the expression of the Supreme Divine Power called *Śakti*, and hence, as such real. It is the unfoldment of Herself into thirty-six *tattvas* i.e. principles. Therefore, the world is as real as the Goddess *Śakti* Herself.

In *Śāktism*, Goddess (*Devī*) is viewed as the real ontological power of the Lord *Śiva*, who is inseparable from Her, eternally. *Śiva* and *Śakti* are the two aspects of the same Reality, inseparable from one another. They stand for one Integral Reality viewed differently from two separate standpoints. As *Śakti* is united with *Śiva*, *Śiva* is united with *Śakti*, and hence, whether you call One in two or two in One, it refers to the same Ontological Reality.

For *Śāktism*, *māyā* is real, for it is one of the thirty-six *tattvas* (principles) of *Śakti*. The world of plurality is the unfoldment of *Śakti* by Her *māyāśakti*. The world consisting of thirty-six principles through unfoldment emerges from Her and returns into her as unmanifest state, in every periodical cycle. Therefore, the world is real. The Goddess (*Devī*) is described as *mahāmāyā* to be propitiated and worshipped by gods, goddesses and humans.³ In *Chāṇḍī*⁴, *mahāmāyā* is identified with *Mahāvidyā*. *Śakti*: the Goddess is the sentient life-principle (*cetanā*), she is consciousness (*citi*), she is intelligence (*buddhi*) in all, she is *śraddhā*: the inbuilt faith in all and she is the

transcendental divine power/potency (*śakti*) pervading within and without everywhere.⁵ All goddesses are parts of the Goddess. All women are forms or reflections of the same *Śakti*.⁶

A true follower of *Śrī Vidyā* is “*Śākta* at heart, a Śaivite in outlook and a Vaiṣṇavite in practice”. The mother Goddess is addressed variously by different names on the basis of Her imagined age and at times on account of Her heroic acts of annihilation of evil forces – as *Śrī*, *Sandhyā*, *Sarasvatī*, *Candikā*, *Śāmbhāvī*, *Durgā*, *Bālā*, *Gaurī*, *Mahālakṣmi*, *Lalitā*, *Rāja-Rājeśvarī*, *Annapūrṇā*, *Mātangi*, *Vārāhī*, *Bhuvaneśvarī*, *Kālī*, *Mahiṣāsūramardini* etc.

The Goddess *Lalitā* is viewed as truly the only One without a parallel. (*Lalitākhyāṁ vastuḥ tad advītiyam*). She is the object of all *vidyās* because she is devoid of the distinctions of male and female. She takes her devotees across the sea of *samsāra*. She is known as *Lalitā* (*Lakṣyatvāt sarva vidyānām liṅgahīnatva samsthiteḥ/tāratkvāt bhavāmbodheḥ Lalīteti prakīrtyate*) and moreover, she may be meditated upon as a male-form or as a female form or as a formless *saccindānanda lakṣaṇam*. Thus the verse spells out the metaphysical glory of the Goddess in *Śaktipūjā*.

This supreme Consciousness-power (*Cid-Śakti*) manifests and unfolds itself in the form of I-consciousness as the transcendental essence of speech (*Vāk*).⁷ This is further expressed in the four forms of speech (*Vāk*) in the descending order as *parā*, *paśyanti*, *madhyamā* and *vaikhari*. As the infinite all-pervading divine power of consciousness, She permeates in the whole world and every being therein. In all created creatures She is present as the dormant power and knowledge, for She is eternally free, transcendental, all pervading and infinite.

Śakti, the goddess is viewed as identical with *Kundalini*. She is the primordial embodiment of *Pranava*, the ‘*Omkāra*’ and the source of fifty-two letters (*akṣara* of Sanskrit alphabet), seven cardinal notes (*svaras*) and their combinations. She, therefore, is described as the *Śabda-Brahman*. The Divine *Śakti* rests coiled in a dormant state, in the *mūlādhāra-cakra* of human body.

Through ceaseless *mantra-japa* (recitation of occult syllable) *prāṇāyāma*, *yoga*, meditation, right knowledge and unswerving devotion, one can have realization and direct vision of Her transcendental form. Unalloyed Supreme devotion is the surest means to please Her and evoke Her grace. This is the surest way to final emancipation. In Śāktism, men and women, highborn and lowborn, all are eligible for *mokṣa*. All can approach Her with all rights and privileges as She is the compassionate Mother of all to welcome them in her vast merciful embrace. Thus She is the entangler and She is the dis-entangler of the *jīvas* from the cycles of birth and death. Acquisition of *mahāvidyā* and constant *mantra-japa* with deep devotion are the chief means of eliciting Her grace.

As such, in the *sādhana-mārga* of Śāktism, the main components are *ajapājapa*, *mantra*-muttering, practice of *prāṇāyāma* and *Kuṇḍalīni yoga*, *dhyāna* (mediation) and *tapas* (austerity), *Guru-sevā* and acquisition of esoteric knowledge, and unalloyed firm devotion and grace of the Goddess. However, *Śaraṇāgati* being a universal means prevalent in all Hindu theistic religious *Sādhana*-forms, Śāktism, especially in its *stotra* literature accepts it and glorifies it in varied language. Here, at sequel is an attempt to highlight the place and glory of *Śaraṇāgati* as found in various *stotras* (hymns) addressed to the Goddess.

We come across verses in *Durgā-saptasatī* and *Śrī Devi Atharvaśīrṣa*, wherein the devotee expresses his prayerful supplication to Goddess, the merciful Mother of mankind, thus:

Śaraṇāgatadinārttaparitrāṇaparāyṇe/

Sarvasyārttihare devi nārāyaṇi namostu te! 8

Salutations to You, Oh! Goddess *Nārāyaṇi*, the dispeller of pains (*ārtti*) Your chief goal is to rescue the poor and forlorn (troubled) who come and surrender at Your feet.

“Pāpāpahāriṇīm devīm bhuktimukti pradāyinīm/

Anantām vijayām śuddhām śaraṇyām śivadām śivām! 9

Goddess Śivā is the dispeller of all sins. She is the bestower of all joys in this world of *bhukti* and hereafter of the *mukti*. She is

eternal victorious pure bestower of auspicious fruits and the refuge for all. In the philosophy and religion of Śakti-worship, the only worthy object of refuge i.e. Supreme Śaraṇya is the Goddess. Her divine glory and power and auspicious virtues are highly extolled in the *stotras*.

The great sage (ṛṣi) Dūrvāsā eulogizes the greatness of the Mother Goddess:

*Geham nākatī garvitāḥ praṇamati śrīsaṅgamo mokṣati
Dveṣi mitrati pātakam sukṛtati kṣmāvallabho dāsatī/
Mr̥tyurvaidhati dūṣaṇam suguṇati tvat pādasaṁsevanāt
Tvām vande bhavabhūtibhañjanakarim gaurim giriśapriyām//*¹⁰

I salute Goddess *Gauri* the beloved of Lord *Giriśa*, the destroyer of fear of *samsāra*, approaching Whose feet the house becomes heaven, one humiliated by me salutes me, makes me free from attachment to women, the enemy becomes friend, evil deeds turn into meritorious deeds, the king becomes servant, abuses become the good-words and even the death becomes friendly.

Ādi Śaṅkara too acclaims the glory of the Śaraṇya – Goddess in ardent devotional outpourings sung melodiously in *Bhavanīstuti*, as:

*Tvadanyad pāṇibhyām abhayavaradau daivātagaṇaḥ
Tvam ekā naivāsi prakāṣitavarābhūtyabhinayā/
Bhayāt trātum dātum phalam api ca vāñchā samadhikam
Śaraṇyau lokānām tava hi caraṇāu eva nipuṇau//*¹¹

All gods except You bestow the boons and offer freedom from fear of *samsāra* by their pose of *varada* and *abhaya* hands. But, you alone are not seen with any such pose of giving boons and shelter, however, O Refuge of all, Your very feet are capable enough in themselves of giving shelter–protection to devotees from deep fear of *samsāra* and thus giving much more than what they expect through their prayers.

Of course the beautiful hymn unto goddess *Durgā* describes Her as the only solace and redeemer from the tentacles of the world. It says:

*Sarva maṅgala māṅgalye śive sarvārtha sādḥike/
Śaraṇye tryambake gaurī nārāyaṇi namostu te//*¹²

I bow down to Thee, oh! Goddess *Gauri*, Thou art the reliever-redeemer of the surrendered ones. Thou art having three eyes to

foresee the fortunes of all. Thou art the auspicious and Thou art the granter and fulfiller of all desires like a holy cow *Kāmadhenu* who fulfills the desires of those who long before Her.

When the devotee realizes his faults and insufficiencies, his torn-apartness, the sufferings of metempsychosis, the futility of his efforts and utter helplessness, he as a *śaraṇāgata* cries out for the help from the only hope in the ocean of *samsāra*. The sage (*rṣi*) *Durvāsa*s reiterates these feelings:

*“Nānāyoni sahasrasambhavavaśājjātā jananyaḥ kati
Prakhyātā janakāḥ kiyanta iti me setsyanti cāgre kati/
Eteṣāṃ gaṇanaiva nāsti mahataḥ samsāra sindhorvidher-
Bhūtaṃ mām nītarām ananyaśaraṇam rakṣānukampānidhe.”*¹³

There is no point in enumerating the (innumerable) number of my mothers and fathers through whom I was born in thousands of different species. Similarly, it is not knowable as to how many more births shall I have to pass through. Therefore, Oh ocean of compassion, please protect me who am utterly scared of the trans-migratory sea of *samsāra* and who have no other refuge.

In the same vain, Ādi Śaṅkara expresses the hapless and helpless heart of a devotee, worshipfully requesting the Goddess to protect him who has approached Her for refuge.

*“Kṛpāpāṅgālokaṃ vītara tarasā sādhu-carite
Na te yuktopekṣā mayi śaraṇadikṣāmupagata
Na cediṣṭam dadhadanupadamaho kalpalatikā
Viśeṣaḥ sāmānyaiḥ kathamitaravalliparikaraiḥ.”*¹⁴

Oh Goddess, endowed of auspicious character, cast Your benevolent graceful sight on me. It does not befit You to neglect/ ignore me who am vowed to surrender at your feet. If the celestial wish-fulfilling tree (*Kalpataru*) does not offer the desired gift, then what is the difference between *Kalpataru* and all other ordinary trees possessing number of creepers?

*“Mahāntam Viśvāsam tava caraṇapaṇikeruhayuge
Nidhāyānyannaivāśrītaṃ miha mayā daivatamume/
Tathāpi tvacceto yadi mayi na jāyeta sadayam
Tathāpi lambodara-janani kam yāmi śaraṇam?”*¹⁵

Oh Mother Goddess! Because of my indubitable faith in the efficacy of Your lotus feet, I have not approached any other deity. Despite this, if Your mind does not melt and become kind-compassionate, Oh Mother of *Lambodara Ganeśa*, whom shall I approach as my refuge?

Thus *Śaraṇāgati*, the refuge seeking as the pathway to the Supreme God/Goddess is universal and all pervading in all religious faiths and cults of India, especially of broad Hinduism and Śāktism is no exception to it. Whenever the deep, direct and intimate relationship between the finite person suffering in the turmoil of the world and the Divine, Who is conceived as the perfect personality and the liberator from it is concerned the *Śaraṇya*, *Śaraṇāgata* and *Śaraṇāgati* certainly have found room in the scheme of spiritual *sādhana* of mankind.

Notes and References

¹ *Niruttara Tantra*, and *Tripurātāpin Upaniṣad* p.28

² Somānanda's *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* iii/20

³ *Devi Bhāgavata* p. 442, Bareilly, 1968

⁴ *Chāṇḍi* 1/72

⁵ *Chāṇḍi* 5,19,22,34,46,52 and 79

⁶ *Tārāhasya*

⁷ *Pratyabhijñā kārikā* – 1/44

⁸ *Durgā Saptasatī* 11/12

⁹ *Śrī Devī Atharvaśiṛṣa*

¹⁰ *Dūrvāsa – Śakti mahīmna-stotra*

¹¹ *Saundaryalaharī* – 4

¹² *Durgā-saptasatī*

¹³ *Dūrvāsa śaktimahīmna-stotra*

¹⁴ Śaṅkarācārya's *Bhāvānīstutiḥ*

¹⁵ Śaṅkarācārya's *Bhāvānīstutiḥ*

Śaraṅgati / Paramgati

DR. JAGJIT SINGH

Śaraṅgati/Śaraṇ is one of the most important concepts in Sikh way of life and it is, of course, very difficult to describe it in English language.

Literal meanings of *Śaraṅgati / Śaraṇ* as per Concise Oxford Thesaurus Dictionary of Synonyms are as Sanctuary, Refuge, Retreat, Haven, Protection, Give up, Relinquish and Renounce. In the realm of spiritualism the real meaning of *Śaraṅgati/Śaraṇa* is hidden in implication of many phrases such as total submission, shelter, divesting of worldly desires, absorption, heart dyed in love of Divine Name, getting liberated by Divine Grace, negation of ego to attain the Lord, to do as He dost ordain – be it suffering or joy, State of Absorption, to follow His *Hukum* i.e. surrendering to the Divine Order, *Raza* i.e. discarding ego, and *Bhana* total submission to Divine Order. It also means de-conditioning of mind by getting rid of *Māyā* or the status of Paramgati -Supreme State of Being.

According to Sikhism, the life of a spiritual person blossoms like a flower with joy ever lasting and the man remains in the state of eternal bliss not after death in some unknown region, but even now and here by seeking *Śaraṇāgati* of the *Guru*. This alone is the greatest possession in any individual's life in the universe.

Guru Nanak placed first thing first and he preached to his followers to restore their faith and undivided loyalty to only One God (EKONKAR) as source of all creation. The attribute of God without enmity and without hatred was introduced by him. Sikhism forbids the worship of anything of the creation. Only God, the Creator of the World is to be glorified. All gods and goddesses have been dispensed with in Sikhism. Sikhism is a way of life shown to mankind by the Ten Divine Masters - Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh -

who were in direct and constant touch with the Eternal Reality. Sikhism is a practical way leading man straight to his goal and does not involve itself in verbose theorizing.

To understand the concept of *Śaraṇāgati* in Sikhism, we fully depend upon *Guru Granth Sahib* – which, unlike other scriptures, is neither history nor mythology – nor a collection of incantations. Its contents are spiritual poetry, the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to the higher life. This holy-scripture of the Sikh faith is looked upon by the Sikhs as visible embodiment of the essence of the persons of the ten Holy Gurus. Being the repository of the divine Word (*Shabda Nama*) it offered worship and not mere veneration. The Granth Sahib consists of hymns of devotion to God, exhorting man towards lifting himself to the state of spiritual peace and attainment of liberation (Mokṣa). Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs compiled this sacred volume in which he included the texts of compositions of his own and his predecessors and authentic texts of the compositions of such of the saints who had preached worship of the Sole, Unattributed, Formless Supreme Beings (EKONKAR). The sacred volume was completed in 1604 and installed in Hari Mandir (Golden Temple). With prophetic insight in future, the compilation of Granth Sahib completed two grand projects of imparting distinctive features the new faith – (1) The Temple (Hari Mandir) that must serve as the center of devotion and the Holy Scripture which must enshrine the spirit of its teachings – The Granth Sahib is the Ship across the Ocean of the World; those devoting their hearts to it, shall swim across.

The Holy Granth is an expanded expression of its vision. Sikhism abjures reliance on all other props and hence advocates unshakeable faith in only One God. Deeds not creed are the most significant in Sikhism.

Maya lies at the basis of all changing phenomena governed by time. It is at the same time the veil that obscures from the human self, the vision of the Eternal. It is the source of all temptations that

drags man to the various evils. It creates the image of duality and is the source of sin. Man is repeatedly warned against involvement with *Maya* and exhorted to be in tune with Brahma.

Man gripped by *Maya* can attain state of bliss, ecstasy called Maha Anand through prayers, meditation and devotion, i.e. *Śaraṇagati* - the Path of *Sehaj*. As seen *Śaraṇāgati* means to live in perpetual Divine Presence. It is the core of the study of Granth Sahib. Union with Absolute is expressed through symbols. The most commonly used such symbol is that of water flowing into water - the stream into the ocean - and the merging to be indistinguishable from it. In *Sukhmani* - The State of Union is thus described

as water into water mingles
so does light merge into divine light
then is ended wandering intransmigration
and rest found

Nanak ever is a sacrifice to the lord (*Sukhmani*)

Guru Arjan Dev elsewhere expresses this experience thus:

The ray into the sun is merged,

Water into water

Light into light has gone,

And perfection achieved (sggs p. 846)

Constant and unfailing God consciousness is expressed all over *Gurubani*. The ultimate end of all spiritual endeavor, is to transcend the experience of Righteous Action (*Dharma*), Illumination (*Gian*) Grace (*karam*) Spiritual Endeavor (*Sarm, Sram*) and to enter Sachkhand (*the Realm Eternal*) eternally to abide in the Divine Presence (*Japa 37*).

ESSENCE OF SIKHISM : ŚARAṆAGATI

In layman's terms the essence of Sikhism can be expressed in three sets of principles each consisting of three phrases as under:

A	1. Nam (Recite Divine Name)	2. Dan (Charity)	3. Isnan (Purification)
B	1. Seva (service to Humanity)	2. Simran (Remembrance of God)	3. Sangat (Holy Congregation)
C	1. KirtKaro (Earn your livelihood)	2. NamJapo (Always remember God)	3. VandChhako (Share your earnings with others)

By following any one of the above said principles, one can attain Śaraṇagati and be united with the Akal Purakh - the Timeless God.

PURPOSE OF LIFE: ŚARAṆGATI

We are all baffled by asking ourselves as to what is the real purpose of human life. It is to seek union with the Lord and come out of the cycle of Aava Gavn. Guru Arjan gives the answer to this question. Says, Guru Arjan

This time having attained human body
 A rare opportunity thou hast got
 This is thy turn to meet the Lord
 Thy all other activities will be of no avail at the end.
 Seek the company of Holy men
 And learn to contemplate on God
 Set thy mind
 On crossing the sea of life
 Life is being wasted away
 In pursuit of pleasures of the world. (SGGS p. 12)
 Spiritually ignorant man casts away the
 pearls of eternal values for the pebbles of temporal gains.
 The day passes in strife, the night in sleep
 Yea, the egocentric suck in poison
 Uttering untruth and so one quits in pain
 Over one's head is the tyranny of Yama
 Led astray by duality one loseth honour
 One cherishes not the Name of the Lord

And so one cometh and goeth on the
wheel of births and deaths. (SGGS)

To realize God is the ultimate object of life. human life cannot be frittered away. Whatever we do, if it cannot serve the purpose, is mere trash.

Cursed be eating cursed be sleep
Cursed be the wearing of clothes
Cursed be the body and cursed be the family with it
Senseless is living if one attains not God in this birth.

Purpose of human life is to seek God and be united with Him. If man avails of the opportunity he gets salvation. If not, he goes down on the whirling wheel of transmigration. It goes on for ages before man gets again human life.

RENUNCIATION: ŚARAṆAGATI

The hypocrisy of renunciation, the dogmatic systems of ascetism the observance of fasts, vows of celibacy meaningless penances and self mortification are all condemned in Sikhism. Physical *yogic* feats acquired through physical exercises and control of breath are declared irrelevant as nothing spiritual can be attained that way.

PATH PARYO AR VED VICHARIO

(Guru Arjan. Sorath)

By reading the holy books and reflecting upon their texts
By controlling breath and cleansing the inner system by
yogic exercises

One cannot get rid of the five 'impulses (lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride)

However, one may perform the conventional religious practices

Unless one surrenders to the Lord, the sense of duality does not abandon.

It even gnaws at the heart.

Before the advent of Guru Nanak, the *Yogic* cult had become very popular. People believed that body was impure and a

hindrance in attainment of salvation. Married life was considered despicable and woman was looked down upon and her status in life was too low. To attain salvation many people renounced the world and went to the forest and exposed themselves to the rigorous exercises. Most of them went about wandering purposelessly, visiting tombs and places of cremation. They were a sort of parasites and burden on society. This philosophy of renunciation signalled the voice of despair and of pessimistic resignation and defeatism. Sikhism does not accept that life is sinful in its origin.

Search for God necessitates the care of the body which needs to be fed properly so that it may survive and function in a suitable manner to achieve its goal. Sikhism is not a philosophy of passivity, negativity or that of inaction. It is a dynamic faith. The world according to Sikhism is a beautiful place to live in and human life is a splendid gift of God to be cherished for a good living. Undergoing self-suppression in a hard way or torturing body cannot avail men in the path of realization. Seeking Śaraṇāgati is the only healthy outlook on life. Renunciation is unhealthy

GOD - REALISATION : ŚARAṆĀGATI

The ultimate aim of Śaraṇāgati is God-realisation. The Kingdom of God is within us but we fail to perceive it. our vanity and self conceit obstruct our vision. Human body is the true temple of God.

Soul in human body is an infinite point in the fathomless ocean of divine life. The finite mind is constrained by time, space and causation By seeking Śaraṇāgati by constant loving remembrance *Simran*, *Kirtan*, *Sat-Sangat* and *Ardas* the Divine Will is revealed. Self-realization breaks all distinctions of names, forms, past, present and future, time, space and causation. It is only now and here and in this very life that one can fulfill one's ultimate aim of life. By *Nam Simran* the mind is washed clean and love of God is awakened There are different stages in the spiritual development as follows:

(1) *Dharam Khand*: Region of Righteous Action. In this region each man is judged according to his deeds.

(2) *Gyan Khand*: Realm of Divine Knowledge: It is the plane of wisdom and joy. Devotee gets visions of the world, countless planets, moon and suns, gods and goddesses.

(3) *Saramkhand*: Realm of Ecstasy: Region of beauty and holy rupture, intellect. In it deep understanding and discrimination are awakened

(4) *Karam Khand*: Realm of Grace: In it dwell mighty heroes and brave warriors of great prowess brimming with divinity of God by completely conquering and vanquishing 'Maya'. In Sukhmani such men are called *Sadh Saints*.

(5) *Sachkhand*: Realm of Truth: It is the highest realm. One who gets its vision, rejoices. It is the last stage of complete oneness with God and one attains the ultimate aim of *Śaraṇagati* in it. In Sukhmani such a perfect man is called *Brahm Gyani*.

PILGRIMAGE: ŚARAṆAGATI

Guru Nanak exhorted the people to rid themselves of the dirt and dross of superstitious, traditional beliefs, meaningless rituals and baseless taboos and to reiterate their entire fabric of thinking on sound rational lines. Visiting the places of pilgrimage and bathing there to secure salvation is a futile exercise in self-deception. In one-way pilgrimage i.e. visiting holy places and taking bath in sacred water is in no way a means to seek *saraṇagati* or coming closer to God.

According to Sikhism, self-assertion and self-denial both these ways take the world to the extreme. The ideal way is the Khalsa way – The balanced state or *Sehaj Avastha*.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Religion is, indeed, a life of discipline and self purification. Self-love and arrogance do not lead us anywhere. The seeker of Truth must surrender himself to Divine Master - unconditionally and unreservedly. This is what *Śaraṇagati* means. The fact is that the way

of religion as shown by the Sikh Guru is not a set of views and doctrines but a way of life based not upon rules and laws but upon discipleship. In the life of a disciple, the personality of the Guru is all along operative, commanding his whole being and shaping his life. The Guru can remove all barriers of race caste, creed, color, sex or country.

Guru Nanak has described the earth as Dharamsal (or Field of Righteousness) on which man is to engage in righteous action and not to retire in a world of self-imposed idleness.

JIVAN MUKTA: ŚARAṆĀGATI

Mokṣa is the end of life as a result of life lived according to the teachings of religion. Its true conception is the annulment of the cycle of births and deaths, i.e. transmigration and the self-abiding ever in bliss of God-consciousness. There is no visible heaven or hell according to Sikh belief. Mukti is a state of consciousness - liberation from *Māyā*, attachment, desire and from sin.

Liberated-while-alive that is while in flesh means not liberation after death of the body. But such liberation must be achieved through a life dedicated to devotion. One engaged in contemplation, devotion and good work is, indeed, liberated. One in whose heart abides the Lord is truly wealthy and of noble lineage. (*Sukhman* 238).

For a Sikh service of the people is the Service of God. For God's creation is an expression of Himself. While living in the world a Sikh must live above it as a lotus in the pond or as a swan in the lake-unwetted by water. State of *Śaraṇāgati* can be sought by leading life, full of purity of character and constantly remembering God.

God has enshrined Himself in the Gum and has manifested and declared Himself through him. In Sikhism the term Guru has a special meaning. It is used for the Divine Master, the Spiritual Enlightener, in the sense of the Cosmic Personality - Impersonal. As spring is to the tree, so is the advent of the Gum. Of course, lofty institution of Guruship has been reduced to mockery by fake Gurus,

pretenders, hypocrites and cheats and unscrupulous self-seekers. The Guru, the savior of humanity bears all the hardships of life;

Gurbani is sure charged with the Guru's spirit, Seeking its Śaraṇa inspires the seeker of Truth. Our relationship with the Guru is not confined to the body alone but it is beyond the physical relationship. It is communion of the soul with the soul, the spirit with the spirit.

Guru the Spiritual Guide, Holy Preceptor holds very important position in Sikhism. His guidance is essential for spiritual upliftment of the disciple. The Guru is no ordinary mortal. He is a divinely inspired, being completely attuned to the Supreme Being. He is identical with Him in spirit. There are repeated pronouncements exalting the Guru. The Guru in his God - experience is Divine and to be revered.

BHAKTI: DEVOTION : ŚARAṆĀGATI

Bhakti or devotion is the path above all commended for realization. Learning and intellectual feats are discountenanced since they are sources of disputation. In Japu Ji it is said

Sahas Sianapan lakh hove ikk nan challai nal

A thousand and hundred thousand feats of intellect shall not accompany man in the hereafter. Guru Arjan Dev in a hymn specifies the sovereign path of God realization.

Na tu awai was bahut ghinawane (SGGS p. 962)

Not by showing great contempt for the world may we win Thy favor

Nor by study of scripture

Nor by holy bathing

Nor by wandering the world over

Nor by subtle philosophy

Nor by shoals given in charity

Thou who art Inaccessible, Unknowable

All in Thy Power lies

Thy devotees alone may command Thy love

From Thee alone I find exaltation

KARMA/HUKUM/GRACES: ŚARAṆĀGATI

Ava-gavan - the transmigrating process is tied up with the doctrine of retribution. Deeds arise of desire, passion (*Trṣṇā* - thirst) continue to involve an individual in the round of birth and death in perpetuity, suffering and sinning.

Guru Nanak affirms referring to man, as under.

Man raises only the crop whose seeds he scatters

By the cosmic law does man traverse the path of transmigration.

Hukum (lit. command) in a broad sense stands for the cosmic moral force called Dharma for the operation of the law of retribution and the law of grace. Karam stands for destiny made according to the individual deeds and from its operation there is no escape. Human birth in the midst of several births spread over long axons is repeatedly called *durlabh* (hard to attain) Valuable birth, this incarnation in human form must not be wasted in pursuit of *Maya* or pleasures of senses. Says Guru Arjan in Raheras:

The state of annulment of transmigration is the state of Bliss (Anand) and is expressed as the mingling of a stream of water with the ocean. Sovereign bliss of grace is available to the human self. Grace is related to the law of Karma. It comes in an inscrutable manner by the Divine Will (Bhāna/ Raza). The Divine mystery of grace is beyond human reasoning and calculations. Guru Nanak says in Sri Raga.

Grace in fact is a Divine mystery. No amount of austerities, intellectual search or performance of rituals or any other device can force it out of God's hand. But without proper humility, wakefulness in the way of God, Grace may not come. The path to attain it is hard, long yet the result is in God's own hand. To fall on God's shelter (*Śaraṇāgata*) in humility inspires the inducement to prayers that open the gateway to grace. Where the Lord in devotion is meditated, on there comes

He as friend - helper,

By the Master's grace lodge in heart the Lord

By no other device is He found.

The Lord's grace comes to those who utterly

Throw themselves on the Lord mercy, grace:

Sikh Gurus give answers to all these questions. According to them, God dwells in every heart. He lives in everything. He lives with us as fragrance dwells in a flower, or reflection in a mirror. He dwells in everything. Therefore, seek His Śaraṇ through the Guru. Before there was creation, God lived absolutely in Himself. He first formed Himself into *Nam* and besides Himself He made nature which He sustains and governs by His Universal laws. For attaining God-consciousness we must come into contact with *Nam* by seeking His Shelter. *Nam* is the elixir of life and without it, life is purposeless. Realization of *Nam* is the essential condition for fruitful life. He who has not taken refuge of the True Guru, nor has come to the congregation of the saints, accursed is his life. *Nam* is the first manifestation of the Unmanifested, matter and soul emanated from Him. God has two aspects (*Nirguṇa*) Impersonal and *Saguṇa* (personal) Name is the key that admits us into the Kingdom of God. By seeking *Nam* the sense of past, present and future is lost. All boundaries and limitations are broken and the individual soul becomes one with the supreme soul.

This happens only when we meet a Reflected Ray - from the Divine Master and echo of Gurbani comes to us. Gurbani is the Living Flame that has come down to us from heaven contained in words vibrant with New Life. *Nam Simaran* is to live in the presence of the Lord. *Simardn* literally means to practice the presence of the all pervading spirit or loving remembrance. The man who enters into the Spirit of *Simaran* immerses himself into the service of the *Guru*. He who drinks the essence of *Nam* is ever intoxicated. Without tasting the Quintessence myriads have been drowned into the *Sea of Maya*. *Nam* is a spiritual presence that mysteriously sustains the Universe. Unless man is in communion with *Nam*, he cannot feel at home in this world in which he is born and reborn. *Śaraṇagati* i.e. seeking

Divine shelter thus means to practise Nam. It means to practise the presence of God by repeating the Divine Name and by constantly keeping Him in mind, by singing His praises or dwelling on His excellences, by living in Him and in love of Him. Sikhism is thus Way of *Nam* (*Nam Marg*) it may be noted that the writ of Karma fate can be erased in this human life by the Grace of Absolute God. It is to invoke not merely through the way of works (*Karam Marg*) or the way of knowledge (*Gyan Marg*) but through his Love- Worship - remaining in the Śaraṇ of the Guru. No priest or intercessor is necessary to initiate one in the Realm of God.

GURU KA LANGAR (COMMUNITY KITCHEN):

PANGAT: ŚARAṆAGATI

The institution of *Guru ka Langar* religiously practised even now, was started by the Sikh Gurus to eradicate caste system and to provide free food to one and all who come to visit the Sikh Gurus. Raw material i.e. provision is contributed according to one's capacity and common food cooked and prepared by the devotees themselves and is served to all. Those who partake food are made to sit in Pangat long rows irrespective of their castes. The sitting arrangements are made on floor or in a big hall and the devotees sit on mats which are unrolled.

The food is served in utensils and if the number is more in Pattats and Dunas as made out of dry leaves. They serve as plates/*thalis* and containers or bowls. While preparing food, the devotees repeatedly recite *Nam* and everybody willingly not only cooks and serves the food, but also shows humility by competing in washing/cleaning the used utensils or collecting Pattas and Dunas.

Mughal Emperor Akbar also took food in *Guru Ka Langar* at Goindwal as Guru Amardas - the third Sikh Guru had ordained that no one could have his *Darśan* unless he had taken food in the *Langar*. By serving in the community kitchen at different stages of cooking and serving food, one develops humility, which negates false sense of pride and as such becomes the gateway of *Śaraṇāgati*.

Cleaning or polishing shoes of the devotees or arranging them by keeping them in pegion holes against token or returning

them or even touching them with one's forehead as a mark of respect, is considered to be the highest service. Even the richest Sikh performs this *Jodian-di-Seva*. It symbolizes negation of ego and total compliment to humility (*Namrata*). It is the Sikh way of Śaraṅgati. Even the Sikh Gurus themselves indulged in it.

SEHAJ : ŚARANAGATI

Śaraṇagati - A key term representing the process of realization and spiritual ascent is Sehaj. It is natural inclination, tendency or way of actions of man. In *Gurbani* it means the path of devotion that involves no forced process of self-purification, nothing that doesn't arise from the depths of the higher self.

Particularly commended is the ideal of *Jivan-Mukta* one liberated while alive or stilt in the flesh. *Jivan Muktas* are those who have transcended the lower self and who live to attain higher spiritual life objectives. It is spiritual self-discipline. Its essence lies in the drawing in the self of realization through the powers of prayers, meditation and devotion. It does away with all ritual action, yoga and occult practices, wearing ear-rings, blowing horns, carrying patched coat, smearing the body with ashes etc. Practitioner of *Sehaj* need not retire to a forest or mountain but must engage in pure, beneficent socially useful action.

ARDAS : ŚARANĀGATI

It is believed that earnest prayers are always acceded to. In *Ardas* after invoking the names of ten Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib, all those who were tortured to death and died in Sikh history as martyrs are remembered. With all Devotion, Humility, Buoyant Spirit. Total submission. Welfare of whole mankind is sought. *Ardas* seeks unshaken and total faith in God whose shelter/*Śaraṇ* is prayed for.

It is believed that the format of *Ardas* was provided by Guru Gobind Singhji From time to time, if needed, it is modified to make any addition or alteration with the approval of the concerned authorities.

The following references to *Ardas* may be quoted:

Before the Lord lay in supplication the pains of thyself

Discard all fears of intellect,

To the Master dedicate both your mind and body.

(SGGS D. 519)

2. This is Thy servant's prayer to Thee,

Thou are the True Lord Protector at all times,

On Thee I meditate.

(SGGS p. 517)

3. With both hands folded I supplicate

Whatever pleases Thee, I submit to it. (SGGS p. 636-37)

To sum up, let us conclude that the *Śaraṇāgati* is the essence of Sikh philosophy. It will be appropriate to identify status of *Śaraṇāgati* in forms of following five equations:

1. Sikhism = A Way of Social & Spiritual life

2. The Way of Social Life = *Śaraṇāgati*

3. *Śaraṇāgati* = *Paramgati*

4. *Paramgati* = *Jivan Mukta*

5. *Jivan Mukta* = To be liberated while alive

[abbreviations SGGS stands for Sri Guru Granth Sahib's English Translation by Gurbachan Singh Talib published by Punjabi University, Patiala, Page numbers given in the Text are page numbers of Guru Granth Sahib and not from the Translated volume.]

(The spellings of Punjabi terms are retained as per the version given by the Author)

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Part II

***Śarṇāgati* Episodes**

from

Our Rich Heritage

of

Galaxy of Bhaktas

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Preface

In **Part-I** of this volume, we have a vast range of research-papers on *Śaraṇāgati* right from Vedic-Upaniṣadic time to all the way upto *Navya-Viśiṣṭādvaita* of Śrī-Swaminārāyaṇa (early 19th century). All these papers have dealt with the definition, nature, criteria, efficacy, procedure and essential requirements involved in *Śaraṇāgati*. Of course, in all these papers we have in-depth analytical study of *Śaraṇāgati* from the perspective of each of the schools. Largely, the schools covered in this volume have both philosophy and religion as the two sides of the same coin. Each of the *Vaiṣṇava*, *Śaiva*, *Śākta* etc schools has ontology, epistemology and metaphysics on one hand, and psychology, eschatology, religion and mysticism on the other hand. The satisfaction of intellectual quest is reaffirmed and confirmed in the practical aspect of religious activity and the realization of the ultimate goal of religious life. That is the reason why, these philosophical schools as darśanas also have a religious sampradāya enabling rational practical seekers to try out and translate and realize the truth through the universal pathway of *Śaraṇāgati*. Intellectual rational philosophy culminates in religion aiming and enabling every aspirant in the realization of the highest goal of emancipation in one's lifetime. It is with this aim in view that the philosophies of religion, in India also discuss the means to attain the goal (*sādhana-vicāra*) and nature and kind of mokṣa (*phala-vicāra*).

In one of the joint meetings of the Governing Council and Academic Council of Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, it was therefore, suggested that along with the publication of the proceedings of the papers of the Seminar having academic value, why not also include exemplary episodes culled from the vast horde of our religious literature to add to the value of the volume from practical point of view for the readers who have their interest in the spiritual accomplishment through the worthy examples of yore. The episodes included here are the ideal stories of the great bhaktas who had realized their highest spiritual goal while being in the midst of

this world full of troubles and tribulations. How they received the grace of God and how God came into their lives and at what stage, and by what means, - become a pointer to the practical seekers of salvation. Since we have discussed all dimensions of *Śaraṇāgati* threadbare in articles included in the **Part I**, we have chosen here to retell these episodes, leaving them open-ended for readers to read from them and see whether one or a few or all the necessary components and requirements (*angas*) of *Śaraṇāgati* were fulfilled by a bhakta! After all, God's grace does not come gratuitously. It just flows down onto a bhakta, when He is moved by the best endeavor-approach. The episodes simply are descriptive of actual predicament of the bhaktas, their approach, their relationship with God and sincerity with which their devotion literally moved God to draw them to Him.

We hope that the readers will certainly find these episodes beneficial in bringing out the implications and significance of the detailed analysis of *Śaraṇāgati* discussed by scholars in the **Part I** of the text and thus make the reading of the **Part II** more useful and meaningful.

Dr. Ramesh M. Dave

Section I

Śaraṇāgati Episodes

from *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavatam*

DR. RAMESH M. DAVE

1. *Gajendra-mokṣa*

The story of *Gajendra-mokṣa* is narrated in all its details in chapter III of 8th Canto of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. The incident of *Gajendra-mokṣa* occurred in the fourth *Manvantara* when Tāmasa-Manu, the son of Priyavrata reigned.

In the valley of Mt. Trikūta, there were lakes and rivers in the wondrous garden, owned by Varuṇa, the lord of the oceans. The garden was dense with celestial trees, laden with sweet fruits and fragrant flowers. Consequently, it had become the sporting garden for celestial nymphs, called Apsaras. They played and bathed in the cool pools of the rivers. The rivers were ever flowing with fresh, clean, clear water.

On the summits of Mt. Trikūta, lived a family of elephants in the thick forest. One day, Gajendra the chief of elephants, entered the garden with his family, to sport. The mammoth Gajendra entered the vast lake with an intention to cool himself and quench his thirst with its sweet water. No sooner he dipped his feet in the lake, a ferocious alligator rushed to him in rage and clutched his foot in its mighty jaw and started dragging the elephant chief in the deep waters. At this sudden attack by the alligator, the wives and children and kinfolks of Gajendra joined together in pulling him out. Thus tug of war on two sides went on. The tired elephants on the bank cried and screamed piteously. They lost their strength and confidence. In this way, they fought for thousand years and ultimately when all efforts were in vain, the elephant king Gajendra turned his attention onto Lord for help and succour. In all meekness and ardent devotion he recalled all the hymns and prayers he had learnt in his previous life as a pious king of Pāndya dynasty. He recited Lord Hari's praise-hymns and pleaded for mercy and protection of life. "O Lord of infinite mercy and grace, please come to my rescue and deliver me from this catastrophe."

यस्मिन्निदं यतश्चेदं येनेदं य इदं स्वयम्। योऽस्मात् परस्मान्न परस्तं प्रपद्ये स्वयम्भुवम्॥ ८-३-३॥

“O Self-existent Lord, in You this whole Universe rests i.e. by You it is supported. From You, this Universe has emerged and into You it shall return. By your will the universe is brought into existence, and is immanenced by You and Yet You are distinct and transcendent to the Universe as the Uncaused Cause. I now have humbly approached You for refuge and protection. Please protect me.” (*Śrīmad Bhāgavat* 8.3.3.)

दिदृक्षवो यस्य पदं सुमंगल विमुक्तसंगा मुनयः सुसाधवः।

चरन्त्यत्रैकव्रतमव्रणं वने भूतात्मभूताः सुहृदः स मे गतिः॥ ८-३-७॥

“You alone are my ultimate refuge: the only shelter. You are of most auspicious divine nature. That is why, to have Your vision (*Darśana*) ṛṣi-munis retire into secluded woods away from worldly pleasures, and they observe scrupulously the sacred vows of celibacy, penance etc. beyond common men’s ability. Why? Just to have the glimpse of Your lotus feet. So, may You be my only destination, O, inaccessible Lord.”

मादृक्प्रपन्नपशुपाशविमोक्षणाय मुक्ताय भूरिकरुणाय नमोऽस्त्यय।

स्वांशेन सर्वतनुभृन्मनसि प्रतीत-प्रत्यगृह्ये भगवते ऋहते नमस्ते॥ ८-३-१७॥

“I humbly bow to you: the Lord of boundless compassion. You alone are eternally free and unbound; and only one who can free an ignorant beast-like soul, like me. I am fallen at Your mercy. I do not know weariness in seeking help from You. My greetings to You, the almighty infinite God. By a part of Your divine power (*yoga-māyā*), You ever reside as the inner controller of the mind of all embodied souls.”

एकान्तिनो यस्य न कञ्चनार्थं वाञ्छन्ति ये वै भगवत्प्रपन्नाः।

अत्यद्भुतं तच्चरितं सुमङ्गलं गायन्त आनन्दसमुद्रमग्राः॥ ८-३-२०॥

“Single-pointed pure devotees do not have any desire except to serve You eternally, worship You as totally surrendered one. They always pine to hear Your glory and sing songs of Your sports and exploits, which are most wonderful and auspicious. This is how they remain merged in the ocean of Your supreme bliss. Such surrendered-ones do not ask nor crave for any other benediction.”

With these words, he picked up a lotus flower from the lake and as an humble offering waved it towards Lord in Heaven. Responding to distressful condition and supplication for saving grace,

the Lord Shri Hari hastily rushed to rescue the elephant king. Stretching out His helping hand the Lord pulled him out of the jaws of his captor by slitting open the mouth of the alligator, with His divine discus (Sudarśana-chakra).

2. Bhakta Prahlāda

Rṣi Kaśyapa was the son of Marīci : the prajāpati. One of his wives was Diti, the daughter of Dakṣa. Once in the evening, overpowered by lustful passion she approached Kaśyapa to satisfy her passion and bless her with a son. Kaśyapa asked her to wait for three *ghaṭikas* (72 minutes) because the hour of the day was terrible, as the evil spirits (*piśācas*) and invisible demons (*rākṣasas*) were wandering about in the sky. But impatient and passionate Diti seized Kaśapa's loin cloth like a vulgar whore and forced him to satisfy her sex-urge. Despite warning, Diti was undeterred, and hence, Kaśyapa fulfilled her wish and inseminated her and gave a serious warning thereafter, that since you have transgressed my command, now two sons born of you shall be most wicked and cruel, who will terrorise all the three worlds. In due course, Diti gave birth to two sons, namely Hiranyākṣa and Hiranyakaśipu.

Hiranyakaśipu had vowed enmity with Lord Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, because the Lord in the form of Varāha had damned and killed his brother Hiranyākṣa. He, therefore, underwent severe penance with utter self-denial and pleased Brahmā to acquire supremacy for himself over all the three worlds and also immortality to reign forever. Brahmā pleased by his severe penance, appeared before him and asked him as to what boon did he want? Aspiring invincibility, Hiranyakaśipu said "Let me not be killed by any weapon by any one created by you: the creator of all beings, either inside or outside the universe, either by day or by night, either by a human or any other living creature, either on the earth or in the air (sky). Let not *devas*, *daityas* or *nāgas* be able to kill me. Let me be blessed by all *siddhis* (super natural yogic powers)."

"So be it", replied Brahmā and returned with great anxiety and anguish. Hiranyakaśipu vowed solemnly: 'I shall not rest until my brother's soul is appeased and placated by the sincere avenger heading Hari by my spear.' He consolidated the strength of all the *daityas*, *asuras* and *rākṣasas* in his kingdom. These forces of

hideous, fierce, tyrant *asuras* roamed around in forests trampling down hermitages and cow-pens, devastating gardens, towns and villages, inflicting torture and tyranny on *ṛṣis*, civilians and animals. He was intent on taking revenge on Hari, and hence dislocated normal life in all the three worlds by giving free hand to militant *asuras*. He invaded the three worlds (*triloka*), conquered them and subdued and subjugated all gods, *ṛṣis*, *siddhas*, *yakṣas* men and beasts. He dethroned Indra, and declared himself as Indra. His oppressive rule was anti-god and anti-scriptures.

During the course of time he had four sons, of which Prahlada was the most pious, virtuous and full of unflinching faith and devotion for Lord Hari. Why was he an exceptional child, devoid of *āsuri* (demoniac) disposition? The answer lies in the fact that: - a baby imbibes best of the traits, if mother takes care to educate it of pious traits during the period of her pregnancy and Diti had taken care to do so when he was in her womb. When Prahlāda was five year old, he was sent to school. Two sons of Śukrācārya, namely Śaṇḍa and Amarka were placed in charge as the teachers of Prahlāda. Prahlāda was very bright and sharp in learning. He used to reproduce the lessons instantaneously after a single hearing. Being a born devotee of Lord Hari, he did not accept teacher's teachings that were prejudicial to Hari and His devotees. He did not accept the discrimination between friends and foes.

Once his father called him lovingly, took him on his lap and asked: 'what did you learn in your school? What is the best thing to do in life?' Quick came the reply from Prahlāda - "Do not make distinction of 'mine' and 'thine'. Do not think of I, Me and Mine. Give up such attachments. With faith and love recite the name of Lord Hari, for it is the best thing to do in life. Do not omit *dharma* (righteousness) and *mokṣa* (aim of emancipation) in espousing *artha* (material prosperity) and *kāma* (fulfilment of desires for sex and happiness)."

These words of Prahlāda infuriated Hiranyakaśipu. But thinking that, he is still a child and hence utters thus, gave strict orders to teachers to brainwash and malign the mind of Prahlāda and impart teachings befitting the *āsuri* personage. All efforts of Śukrācharya and his sons who were teachers of Prahlāda failed miserably in converting him. After the passage of long time, when once again

Hiraṇyakaśipu called the child and asked him as to what did he learn? Once again, Prahlaḍa reaffirming his faith in Lord Śrī Hari replied: “one should surrender himself with all his possessions at the feet of Lord to be happy here and hereafter.”

Hearing these words, Hiraṇyakaśipu seized by frenzy screamed: “Take away this traitor and betrayer of family. Tear him to pieces. I don’t want to see him any more. Kill him by any means.”

The *āsuri*-guards of Hiraṇyakaśipu dragged him away mercilessly. They tried to slay him, but their weapons turned out ineffective on Prahlaḍa. They, thereafter were asked to try all other possible means to finish him. So, they tried to trample him under the feet of elephants, got him stung by deadly cobras, threw him in boiling oil, but all their efforts were in vain, as Prahlaḍa was under the protective shield of Lord Śrī Hari.

Frustrated and confused and angry Hiraṇyakaśipu felt his pride terribly wounded. He was tormented by Prahlaḍa’s unimaginable immunity to death. His wrath and anger became uncontrollable when Hiraṇyakaśipu and his appointed teachers found that the contagion of Viṣṇu-Bhakti has spread amongst all the boys (class-mates) of Prahlaḍa’s school. He, therefore, shouted, “Why do you disobey me often and again? Why do you act as a traitor, a vile enemy of *asuras*? When all the three worlds (*triloki*) tremble before my rage, how dare do you think of disobeying me?”

Prahlaḍa coolly replied: “Well father, Lord Śrī Hari is my strength, support and protector. Even your strength and of everyone in the universe, also comes from Him alone. So, please look within yourself coolly and you shall find Him.”

“You stupid ignorant kid, remember that there is no God greater than me. And if there is any, show me where is He?” Laughing at the ignorance of Hiraṇyakaśipu, Prahlaḍa said: “Oh! He is everywhere.” Scornfully Hiraṇyakaśipu asked the next question: “Is he then in this pillar?” Confidently Prahlaḍa replied: ‘He also is there, I see Him there.’ Raging with anger he barked: ‘I myself shall behead you. Let him show Himself and protect you.’ Saying so, he rushed at the pillar, struck the pillar vehemently with his fist.

And lo! The Lord emerged out of the pillar in the frightful *Ṛṣimha*-form (Man-Lion-form) and then as if like picking up a toy,

Nṛsimha picked up *asura*-king, placed him on His thighs in a half-seated posture and tore his belly to death with His sharp nails.

Seeing the rageful face of Nṛsimha, gods and men dared not go closer to Him. With hands folded before Him, they stood in prayerful supplication, struck with awe, wonder and fear. At last, Brahmā sent Prahlāda to pacify the Lord Nṛsimha. In all meekness, Prahlāda prostrated at the feet of the Lord. Pacified and tendered by this gesture of Prahlāda, the Lord very graciously placed his hand on his head and by His divine touch He drained out all *āsuri* evil elements from the mind of Prahlāda and filled his heart with illumination of *Brahma-vidyā*. Spontaneously the sublime prayer flew out from the mouth of Prahlāda standing in a kneeling posture with both the hands folded and the tears of fulfilment gushing from his eyes.

Prahlāda said:

त्रस्तोऽस्म्यहं कृपणवत्सल दुःसहोऽग्र संसारचक्रकदनात् ग्रसतां प्रणीतः ।

प्रद्वःस्वकर्मभिरुत्तम तेङ्गिघ्नमूल प्रीतोऽपवर्गशरणं ह्यसे कदा नु ॥ ७-९-१६ ॥

“O the Lover of miserable and forlorn! I am not afraid of your horrific form, but really afraid of dreadful terrible suffering involved in the transmigratory cycle of births and deaths. As a consequence, I am bound by the fetters of the karmas (actions) of my own good and evil making. I am, hence born in the midst of blood-thirsty demons.

O most effulgent shining Lord! Be pleased on me. I am eagerly waiting. When will You call me to serve you at Your feet in *Vaikuṇṭha*, the abode of final beatitude.

सत्त्वं हि नित्यविजितात्मगुणः स्वधाम्ना काले वशीकृतविसृज्यविसर्गशक्तिः ।

चक्रे विसृष्टमजयेश्वर षोडशारे निष्पीड्यमानमुपकर्षविभो प्रपन्नम् ॥ ७-९-२२ ॥

Oh Lord! You by Your innate power of omniscience have always kept under control the intellect (*Buddhi*) and its functions. You are the Supreme controller. You are the Supreme Time-spirit (*Kāla*). All creation-destruction and cause – effect relations are under your sway and control. Unfortunately, I am trapped in the sixteen spoked¹ wheel of *samsāra* on account of beginningless *avidyā*. Therefore, O almighty Lord! I have sought refuge in you. Please draw me closest to you and protect.”

“Oh my Lord (Swami)! I know that nothing can please you save devotion offered after seeking refuge at your feet. A *cāṇḍāla* (outcaste) is far superior to a devotionless brahmin endowed with 12 virtues of brahminhood, because he dwells in pride of his high birth and brahmin-traits of Superiority. As against this, a *cāṇḍāla* is holier, if he has surrendered himself in his thought, speech and action to You. So, he will certainly redeem himself and his family, while a brahmin who has turned his back on you can't liberate even his own self from the cycles of birth and death.

I know, I am born in asura clan, and thus am full of vices and insufficiencies. I am not scared of Your horrific form, but I am all the while scared of the cycle of births and deaths. Therefore, protect me from my vices and āsuric traits and kindly give me shelter at your feet, which alone can free me from this *samsāra*, forever. I request You, to bless me with a company of the great saints (*mahātmās*) in whose *satsanga* I can free myself from bodily and worldly attachments and can sing glory of You and purify myself.”

Pleased with the prayer, the lord, in return, blessed him with regal honour and splendour to rule the earth for the whole *manvantara*. The Lord then asked him to ask for a boon to be happy here in the world. To this Prahlada as a true devotee replied:

मा मां प्रलभयोत्पत्त्या सक्तं कामेषु तैर्वरेः ।

तत्सङ्गभीतो निर्विण्णो मुमुक्षुस्त्वामुपाश्रितः ॥ ७-१०-२ ॥

“O Lord! I humbly am praying to You. Please do not tempt me with boons granting *pañca viśayas* (five-fold objects of worldly enjoyment), because I already am attached to such worldly pleasures right from my birth. I, therefore, am very much afraid of attachment to them and I am fed up of them. I am now very much anxious to attain freedom from the cycles of birth and death. So, I have approached You for protection. Please protect me.”

The Lord said: “You shall ever remain attached to Me devotionally. You will become an ideal devotee for others to emulate and remain steadfast on the path of devotion.”

May God bless us with the strength and determination like Prahlada in our lives. That is our earnest prayer at the holy feet of the Lord Shri Hari.

3. Śaraṇāgati of Bali

The king Bali was a son of Virocana and the grandson of Prahlāda. Bali was a great bhakta, a personification of all virtues and devotion unto Lord Śrī Hari.

Once upon a time Indra and host of gods together defeated asuras and king Bali and killed them to death. But Śukrācārya the guru of asuras revived Bali to life. Bali, thereafter, with the help of Bhṛgu-race brāhmins performed a great *viśvajit-yajña* successfully, in which he received a golden aerial car and a chariot with green – coloured horses, lion-marked flag, a golden bow, a divine protective armour (*kavaca*), and a pair of quivers giving inexhaustible supply of arrows, from the sacrificial (*yajña*) fire. Along with these gifts from fire, Bali also got a fresh garland from his father Prahlāda and a conch from his guru Śukrācārya as blessing-gifts.

Well-equipped with all these necessary equipments, Bali waged a war with Indra and attacked *Svarga*. By sudden attack, Indra was taken a back. He consulted Bṛhaspati: the guru of gods, who advised Indra that the time is now inauspicious and unfavourable for gods (*devas*). They won't be able to win without the help of Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore, leave everything and go and hide yourselves in some invisible place till the favourable time for your ascendancy occurs. Indra and gods followed the advice of Bṛhaspati and accepting the defeat, they disappeared. Thus Bali became the cakravarti king of Triloki (three lokas, viz. Bhu-Bhuvar, Svar and Pātāla)

Seeing the victorious status of Bali, Śukrācāra: the guru of asuras asked him to conduct one hundred Aśvamedha-Yajnas. Bali thought that this is the right way to thank Lord Viṣṇu Who has blessed him with rulership of Triloki and thereby disseminate dharma and virtues in the subjects.

At the downfall of gods, their mother Aditi became disconsolate. She with tears in her eyes asked her husband ṛṣi-Kaśyapa as to what should be done now? Kaśyapa arose from long-term deep meditation. Kaśyapa told her, "Lord Śrī Hari's maya is very powerful and undecipherable. So, keep worshipping Lord with unshakable faith and devotion. In the bright fortnight of the month of Falguna, observe the vow of Payovrata." The vow of Payovrata consisted in observing continuous twelve-day fasts living only on cow-milk, with engagement in worship, devotion, ceaselessly muttering

the name of God and singing glory of Lord Viṣṇu. Aditi, very sincerely and meticulously did the payovrata as told by her husband. Pleased on her penance and devotion Lord Hari appeared before her and said: "I know your misfortune and yearning of heart. Wait patiently till the inauspicious time gets over. I assure you that, thereafter I Myself shall take birth from your womb through the energy of your husband Kaśyapa, who is pure at heart and clean in spotless character."

Aditi got overjoyed at seeing Lord Hari and receiving promise from Him which was her long cherished desire. She waited most patiently with intensified devotion and ceaseless alignment of her mind in God. The day arrived when the portion of Lord's divine energy entered in ṛṣi Kaśyapa. Kaśyapa then concentrating his mind in Lord Viṣṇu-Hari, injected his seeds into Aditi and thus the *amśa* (portion) of Lord was passed into Aditi.

Afterwards on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Bhādrapada (in Abhijita-nakṣatra) at midday the Lord came out of the womb of Aditi as a fully developed dwarf-t-boy. No sooner the Lord incarnated, the celestial heavenly sounds of drums, conch, trumpet etc came from the sky.

Ṛṣis and gods assembled at the hermitage of Kaśyapa to see the new incarnation of Lord Śrī Hari. Seeing fully grown up dwarf-form of God, they immediately conducted the thread ceremony (*Yajnopavita-vidhi*) of the newborn and named him as Vāmana. Batuka-brahmacāri Vāmana was gifted with different articles needed for a brahmacāri by the gods and goddesses. The articles included sacred thread, waist-string, codpiece, loin cloth for waist, rosary, *kamandalu*, begging bowl and tiger skin. Goddess Umā came forward to give first *bhikṣā* (midday-meal) to the *brahmacāri*. In this way the ceremony got over.

The time was now the most opportune. So, without any delay Vāmana proceeded to attend the *aśvamedha* yajna of Bali on the banks of river Narmadā. The moment Vāmana reached there, Bali welcomed him affectionately with honourable words, because He looked radiant and attractive like four Sanat-kumaras in spiritual splendour. Bali and his wife Vindhyāvali washed the feet of Vāmana-brahmacāri and sprinkled the washed holy water on their heads to become more sanctified. Bali then requested Vāmana-brahmacāri

to name his wish. He said: “whatever you want, please let me know. Please name your wish, be it land, gold, wealth, palace, cows or even a young maiden girl. Since I have vowed to grant readily anything asked of me, I shall certainly give it as a charity.” Little Brahmācāri Vāman averred: “Give me only three paces of land.” Bali was much amused with such a nominal demand. He once again told Vāmana, “Don’t doubt my bonafide. Be rest assured. You will certainly get whatever you ask. So, please ask something more, something more valuable.” Greatly pleased Śrī Hari incarnated in the dwarf-form (Vāman) answered, “your words are really worthy of a pious virtuous king like you and your grandfather Prahāda. I know that, you, therefore, shall not break a promise once you pledge. You, like your grandfather are committed to dharma-rules and donation of promised charity. But I want only a bit of land worth three paces, because a man should not greedily ask for more than his necessity. A brahmachari should be content with bare necessity.”

Bali laughed and replied: “O.K. accept it.” Bali then took in his palm a few drops of water to take a pledge of making the formal gift. Sukrācārya the guru of asuras could make out that this young brahmācāri is Lord Viṣṇu Himself Who has come to bankrupt Bali deceitfully. He, therefore, warned Bali with words of caution: “This Brahmācāri is not an ordinary dwarf. He is all pervading Viṣṇu. So, don’t get into His trap. He may deceitfully rob you of everything. He may stamp you down into Naraka (hell). So forget your pledge, and promise and truth-abidingness. Desist from your promise and also from what you are doing”

Bali alledged:

इत्थं स निश्चित्य पितामहो महानगाग्रोधो भवतः पादपद्मम्।

ध्रुवं प्रपेदे ह्यकुतोभयं जनाद् भीतः स्वपक्षक्षपणस्य सततम् ॥ ८-२२-१०

“ My grandfather Prahāda was the best exalted soul who had achieved unfathomable wisdom. He was highly honoured by one and all. He was the foremost among virtuous. He was afraid of worldly people, and hence, shunned their company. He was convinced of Your (Hari’s) capacity of yielding total protection and shelter to the surrendered one. He, therefore, had taken refuge at Your lotus feet against the will of his father (Hiraṇyakaśipu) who along with his other āsuri (demoniac) associates were killed by Your mighty Self.”

In the like manner, Bali was a great devotee with unflinching faith in Lord Śrī Hari. To Śukrācārya, he replied: “Don’t forget. I am the grandson of the great bhakta Prahlaḍa. I will not indulge in untruth nor shall I desist from what I have promised. If as you say, he throws me in hell, I shall worship Him there also, even if He is my enemy as you claim.” Saying so, unmoved Bali, uttered the sankalpa of charity and got ready to offer three paces of land as per His wish. Bali’s consort Vindhyāvali also joined him with same measure of devotion and enthusiasm.

Then Lord Vāmana miraculously enlarged His form and grew into all eclipsing enormous form. The whole universe became visible in Him. In his first pace, He seized the whole of *Bhu-loka* and *Bhuvar-loka*, and in the second pace He seized all the way upto *Brahmaloka* through *Svar-lokas*. Thus Lord Vāmana covered everything in two paces, leaving nothing behind for the third pace.

Seeing this act of God the *Asurās* were terribly enraged. They screamed: “this is unjust, this is trickery. It is no sin to wage a war and kill this so-called dwarf *brahmacāri*: the deceitful Viṣṇu.” With these words they started fierce fight with the accompanying followers of Vāmana, in which they had the shameful defeat. But, Bali immediately shouted at them and said: “There is no point in fighting when I have whole-heartedly accepted to yield to this *brahmacāri*. When our time was good, He allowed us to win over gods, and now when their time is good, allow them to win over. This is the wish of the same Bhagavāna.”

At this time, Garuḍa: the mount of Lord Viṣṇu became concerned and he understanding the wish of the Lord tied Bali with the noose of Varuṇa. Bali accepted that too.

Lord Vāmana then asked Bali, “Where do I place my third step? What about my third pace promised by you? Did you tell a lie? If you don’t fulfil your promise, then you will have to go to hell (Naraka). With folded hands Bali replied, I don’t tell untruth. I have no intention to deceive you. Here is myself, you may place your foot on my head for Your third pace. Look! I am not scared so much of hell (Naraka), nor of this noose of Yours, nor of the torture and punishments that may be inflicted on me. I am only afraid of a blame of breach promise by the good people and the great devotees. On the contrary, I take this act of Yours as an act of grace and mercy

– a worthy favour shown on me out of right recognition for my grandfather Prahlāda. After all, of what use this body is? I am convinced from the bottom of my heart that You are not at all my enemy. On the contrary, by loosing this kingdom and ownership of Triloki and my body, I feel I am drawn closest to your heart. Isn't that the biggest favour of Yours?"

From antarikṣa (heavenly sky) suddenly at that time, Prahlāda appeared. He bowed down to Vāmana-form of Viṣṇu–Hari and spoke: "Oh Lord, You were the One to give chance to rule over Triloki to Bali and now it is You who have taken it back. Everything after all belongs to you alone. Power corrupts man with pride and arrogance and causes bondage to his self. So, thank you, for saving us from bondage."

Then Vindhyāvali the wife of Bali said "O Lord, You are the creator, sustainer and destroyer of Triloki. How can we, therefore pretend to claim the ownership over Triloki? It was Yours, and it is still Yours."

Bali then spoke:

अहो प्रणमायकृतः समुद्यमः प्रपन्नप्रकार्यविधौ समाहितः ।

यल्लोकपालस्त्वदनुग्रहोऽमरेरलम्बपूर्वोऽपसदेऽसुरोर्पितः ॥ ८.२३.२॥

"I just made an humble attempt to offer relevant obeisance to You. And lo! What a wonderful result I got? My humble attempt of offering obeisance to you have become rewarding as those of pure devotees. I am a demon, fallen and forlorn, yet You have shown Your overflowing unmotivated mercy on me. Such a favour is never seen in the past either on gods (devas) or on the guardians of the planets. (lokapālas)."

Then Prahlāda averred:

यत्पादपद्ममकरन्दनिषेवणेन ब्रह्मादयः शरणादाश्श्रुवते विभूतीः ।

कस्माद् वयं कुसृतयः खल्योनयस्ते दाक्षिण्यदृष्टिपदवीं भवतः प्रणीताः ॥ ८.२३.७॥

"O, the Supreme Refuge of all even the great personages like Brahmā-Śiva-Indra enjoy their power, opulence and privileged position simply because they too have tasted the nectarine benefits of rendering service at Your lotus feet. You are affording shelter to all. However, I fail to understand as to how are we lucky to receive your graceful mercy, when I know that we are born of a wicked race of asuras who always pursue evil ways of life? We are lucky to receive

Your gracerul look simply because Your mercy is unmotivated and causeless.” (8-23-7)

Hearing all these dialogues, Brahmā appeared and told: “O Viṣṇu the God of gods, You have taken away everything of this bhakta-Bali, who as *āṭmanivedi* has surrendered his everything including his self without being moved in the least. Now, please free him from the noose of Yours. Don’t keep him bound in any form.”

Bhagavan Viṣṇu-Vāmana said: “Look. I took away everthing of Bali, because when I favour any devotee of Mine by My grace, I first take away all his riches and comforts. I make him dispossessed of all ownerships, so that no kind of pride or egoity should ever bind him and keep his mind away from Me. After innumerable births in different species, a jiva gets a chance to be born as a human being. And I do not want him to remain tied to any material attachments. My devotee who is constantly attached to Me with love and devotion is freed of all possessions to make him egoless devotee of Mine. This king of āsuras (dānavas and daityas) is now able to overcome unsparingly binding *māyā* of Mine. That is why, he has no grief, nor any grievance. He now is foresaken by his own guru, his peoples and friends, because Bali did not give up Truth, did not give up Me.”

And Lord added: “I am so much pleased that I shall certainly give him a place in My abode to enjoy My company, which is extremely difficult for others to attain. In Sāvārṇi-*Manvantara*, Bali shall also be Indra. However, till then Bali shall be staying in Sutala where there is no place for bodily and mental pain, where there is no sleepiness and fatigue, where there is no defeat nor any misfortune and other afflictions. With My grace and blessings Bali shall now go and stay in Sutala with His attendants and associates. And if at all any daitya or dānava ever attempts to chase him or harass him. My Cakra shall destroy that person. I shall, whenever remembered, come and give you my *darśana* in Sutala. From now on āsurī traits, if left any in him shall be destroyed by My power.”

Lord Viṣṇu asked Prahlaḍa to accompany Bali in Sutala.

When Vāmana-form of Viṣṇu placed His foot on the head of Bali as the third pace, Bali held the sole of Lord’s foot and started licking the sole of the foot of the Lord. Lord Viṣṇu looked below at the face of Bali and asked: “Hey, what are you doing?” Bali humbly said, “My Lord, I am a born *asura*, so my thorn-like hair must be

pricking and thus causing pain in it. So, please pardon me, a born *dānava*. Hearing such devout loving words of humility and servitude, Lord Viṣṇu was all the more pleased. He asked Bali to ask for a boon. Bali said, "My Lord, remain always before my eyes, giving me Your ceaseless *darśana*." "So shall it be," said the Lord. And as promised, He stands forever at the door of *Sutala*, enlightening Bali with the *darśana* of His beauteous bewitching form to enjoy beatitude divine! From then on Bali as one of the best surrendered-bhaktas, came to be known as Mahābali, and total self-sacrifice at the feet of God is called Balidāna.

4. Kāliya Mardana

The *nāgas* : the cobra-snakes used to make ritualistic offerings to Garuda the mount of lord Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, year after year, on a specific day. Kāliya: the King Cobra was very proud of his prowess and valour. Out of pride and arrogance, he refused to make offerings to Garuda. Besides, he not only forbade others making such offerings, but took away the offerings made by his clansman and thus incurred the wrath of Garuda. Garuda, therefore, made fierce attack on him, defeated him and drove him away. Kāliya had to fly to find a safe shelter in the deep waters of river Yamunā, with his vast family and kinsmen. The water of Yamunā as a consequence, became deadly poisonous. The air in the surrounding area became poisonous on account of poisonous fumes emitted by the hiss of Kāliya who had thousand hoods, of which were hundred most prominently deadly.

Once in summer, Kṛṣṇa and his cowherd boy-friends (*gopabāla*) unawaresly brought their cattle to the bank of Yamunā. The cattle drank the Yamunā-water and soon they fell dead on its bank. Kṛṣṇa rushed to the spot and stared at the cattle. His divine gaze soon restored them to life. Instantaneously, he decided to purify the Yamunā-water from its poison forever. He found out the cause of Yamunā's contamination. Deep in the large pool in its center was living Kāliya: the dragon cobra with his family and retinue for millennia, and Yamunā therefore, was called Kālindi. The water, therefore, was very foul-smelling, dark in colour and hot as if at boiling point.

To drive the Kāliya cobra away, Kṛṣṇa climbed onto the tall leaning branch of a nearby tree and with a somersault plunged into

the deep waters of Kālindi. Kāliya suddenly disturbed by the dare devil act of Kṛṣṇa, rose up with fury and avenging rage. Caught hold His tender physique into his winding twine, spreading all of his hoods to gnaw Kṛṣṇa's body thoroughly by his multiple venomous fangs and to cut His body asunder. The cowherd boys were taken aghast by the sudden sight of their beloved's approaching death. Some of them fell sense-less into swoon out of shock and others who were terror-stricken started yelling and crying, with tears rolling down their eyes. His loving kine bellowed loudly out of distress for their Lord Kṛṣṇa. Nanda and the people of *Vraja* rushed to the spot and stood speechless, forlorn and helpless. Unfortunately Balarāma was not in the company of Kṛṣṇa that day. Yaśodā was broke and fell in swoon, while Nanda prepared to dive in the water to save his child, but Balarāma who knew the glory and prowess of Kṛṣṇa, stopped him.

For a long time Kṛṣṇa allowed Kāliya-dragon to try his strength in his twining clasp and on seeing the distress of His cows, boy-friends and *Vraja*-folk, He suddenly inflated His body with tormenting strength and force, which made it impossible for Kāliya to hold him any longer. Freed and risen, with a single leap, He stood firm dancing rhythmically on the fuming hoods of Kāliya. Trampling one after another, Kṛṣṇa broke and crushed his hoods. Furious Kāliya hissed again and again, spurted fiery poison and whirled like a fast motion disc to topple Him down. Alas! all attempts of Kāliya were in vain and when totally spent, it vomited black blood and fell unconscious. Kṛṣṇa had placed the weight of the whole world on the hoods of Kāliya and crushed them under the strokes of His dancing feet. The loyal chaste wives of the Kāliya-cobra came forward with their children before Kṛṣṇa, prostrated before Him and pleaded for mercy on him.

तास्तं सुविग्रमनसोऽथ पुरस्कृतार्थाः कायं निधाय भुवि भूतपतिं प्रणोमुः ।

साध्यः कृताङ्गः लिप्नुताः शमलस्यभर्तुर् मोक्षोप्सवः शरणदं शरणं प्रपन्नाः ॥१०-१६-३२॥

They were terribly perturbed mentally, these chaste serpent-wives led their children before Him. They prostrated and bowed down low to Śrī Kṛṣṇa: the Supreme Refuge. With the folded palms they stood eagerly to beg deliverance of their sinful husband. They begged shelter of the Supreme Lord the provider of eternal

protection. In this way, they sought the Lord, who affords protection to all, as their only Refuge.

न नाकं पृष्ठं न च सार्वभौमं न पारमेष्ठ्यं न रसाधिपत्यम्।

न योगसिद्धीरपुनर्भवं वा वाञ्छन्ति यत्पादरजःप्रपन्नाः॥ १०-१६-३७॥

The surrendered-ones who have secured the dust of Your holy feet do not hanker after the lordship of the highest heaven. (the realm of *Brahmā*). They do not aspire for unlimited sovereignty or the ruler-ship over this world. They are not even interested in accomplishment of Yogic-powers, nor even freedom from cessation of rebirth.

Kṛṣṇa took mercy on Kāliya and gazed at him. Kāliya then regained his consciousness from the deep swoon. Humbled and softened, Kāliya meekly spoke to Lord thus:

वयं खल्वः सहोत्पत्त्या तामसा दीर्घमन्यवः।

स्वभावो दुस्त्यजो नाथ लोकानां यदसद्ग्रहः॥ १०-१६-५६॥

O Lord! We the snakes are born *tamo-guṇi* i.e. of the innately wrathful nature. We do not forget to take revenge even after a lapse of long time. It is extremely difficult or rather impossible to get rid of such an innate weakness by self-efforts and that is why the common men (full of vices) get entrapped in their inherent weakness and suffer consequently.

भवान् हि कारणं तत्र सर्वज्ञो जगदीश्वरः।

अनुग्रहं निग्रहं वा मन्यसे तद् विधेहि नः॥ १०-१६-५९॥

You are free to punish me as You wish or else be merciful, and kindly accept my supplication and pardon.

Pleased of his supplication, and submission, Kṛṣṇa mercifully commanded, “You shall no longer stay here in Kālindī. Instantaneously shall you leave the place fearlessly with your wives, children and retinue and seek asylum in the Ramanak-island, and Garuḍa : the king of birds shall no more scare you seeing my footprints on your hoods.

Kāliya, following the command of the Lord, withdrew to Ramanaka-island. There arose great joy among Vraja-folks, for Kālindī was no more poisonous now on. Its water sanctified by Lord’s holy feet turned clean and nectarine sweet.

5. Śaraṇāgati of Draupadi

Draupadi was most virtuous and loyal consort of Pandavas. Her father was the king Drupada of the land of Pāncāla; and hence, she was also addressed as Pāñchālī. As she was born from *yajñakunḍa* at a sacrifice performed by Drupada, she was called Yajñaseni too.

Draupadi was referred to as Kṛṣṇā because she is regarded as the sister of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. She had faithful loving devotion unto Him. She had a blend of the best qualities of a good woman, a very virtuous wife of Pāṇḍavas and the most admirable mother. She is described in *Mahābhārata* as the righteous, intelligent, beautiful woman of adorable qualities and of impressive traits. Although she was a wife of five Pāṇḍavas, her love, relationship and conduct with all of them was so harmonious and ideal that she occupied a place of honour in the heart of all.

Yudhiṣṭhira and his kingdom of Indraprastha, was growing in greater prosperity and dignity. This had become the cause of envy and hatred in the mind of ever discontent Duryodhana. Disconsolate and sorrow-struck Duryodhana therefore plotted at the advice of Shakuni to entrap Yudhiṣṭhira by a trickery in dice game. It was a plot of Shakuni to defeat and divest Yudhiṣṭhira of all his possessions, and to banish him into exile, for he knew that Pāṇḍavas are strong and invincible otherwise. So, Duryodhana sent an invitation for playing the game of dice, which as a *rājadharmā* duty - conscious Yudhiṣṭhira cannot refuse. In addition, Duryodhana was cocksure that Shakuni, expert in manipulation, shall certainly win everything of Pāṇḍavas and thus ruin them. Vidura, who had come to convey the invitation, warned Yudhiṣṭhira that wagering dice game is the root cause of most of the evils. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in refusing the invitation. In spite of right warning, Yudhiṣṭhira accepted the invitation and went to Hastinapura with his brothers and attendants. Of course, he did say before commencing the game: "Undoubtedly, gambling is bad. A true *Kṣatriya* should take pride in conquest through heroic victory in the battle, instead of deceit and crooked skills. The wise *ṛṣis* in the past have condemned it, and hence, it should be shunned."

As planned, Shakuni the expert manipulator and mischief manager in dice game was playing on behalf of Duryodhana, which was against the rule of game. So, Yudhiṣṭhira expressed his hesitation

to play with him, because defeating Duryodhana was easier for him than to play with untrustworthy crafty Shakuni. To this, Shakuni tauntingly passed a comment, 'what an excuse to turn down the invitation to play?' Yudhiṣṭhira with caution and suspicion finally agreed to play.

Yudhiṣṭhira: the man of righteousness, virtue and noble character went on facing a series of defeats in the game. He wagered his wealth, jewels, ornaments, horses, chariots, palaces etc. and lost them. He then staked his elephants, armies, servants, cows, sheep and subjects. He lost all of them due to the trickery and deceitful tactics of Shakuni. The great personages like Droṇācārya, Kṛipācārya, Bhīṣma, Vidura were witnessing the game. They were all upset, but were tongue-tied with great anxiety and surprise. Notorious Shakuni trapped Yuddhisthira in offering his brothers and finally himself on the wager. Dogged by ill-luck and loss of practical wisdom, Yudhiṣṭhira despairingly pledged Draupadi. The assembly was terrified by this decision of Yudhiṣṭhira. But for Yuyutsu; Shakuni, Karna, Duryodhana and his brothers were shamelessly overjoyed. Shakuni played his last trick, casted the dice and screamed jubilantly: 'Look! I have won, once again.'

Duryodhana then immediately turned to Vidura and asked him to fetch Draupadi. Vidura, the wisest of all got up and warned "don't invite total destruction of yours and your brothers. Have you gone mad by the pride of victory?" He turned to assembly and told all respectable elders: "What right did Yudhiṣṭhira have to stake Draupadi when he himself had lost his freedom and lost all his rights as a slave? It will lead to the total ruin of Kaurava family."

At this Duryodhana angrily shouted: "This Vidura always takes the side of Pandavas for he is jealous of us. So, O Pratikāmi (the chariotcer), you go fast and bring Draupadi here."

Pratikāmi rushed to Draupadi's chamber and said, "I have come here at the behest of my master Duryodhana to take you to him as a maid servant and to make you serve him in his house-hold chores as a female slave. Because, after losing everything including himself Yudhiṣṭhira at last had wagered you in the game of dice and lost you. So, now on, you belong to Duryodhana as his possession."

Draupadi fearlessly blazed in anger and told Pratikāmi to go back and ask in the assembly: "Did Yudhiṣṭhira first loose himself or his wife? Bring me the answer before taking me from here."

Pratikāmi went back to the assembly, asked the question insisted by Draupadi. But Yudhiṣṭhira was dumbfounded. So Duryodhana asked Pratikāmi to fetch her immediately.

Poor Pratikāmi went once again to Draupadi and respectfully said, "Duryodhana has now stooped to meanness. He insists on you to come and personally ask the questions."

Firm and determined Draupadi refused to comply. She told Pratikāmi to go back to the assembly and announce the question to elders and return only after receiving answers. Seeing Pratikāmi returning empty handed Duryodhana angrily told his brother Duḥśāsana, "Go quickly and fetch that woman soon, and if needed drag her here to the assembly."

Impatiently did Duḥśāsana rush to the chamber of Draupadi and shouted "You now belong to us. What right have you now to delay? You are our slave, maidservant of Duryodhana's in the palace. Don't be shy, beautiful woman! Please us, for you are won by us in the game of dice.

Draupadi started trembling out of fear and agony. She rebuked him for his meanness, and asked him to stay away from her, as she was in monthly period of impurity. She therefore, tried to rush into the inner room for safety. But, alas, Duḥśāsana furiously chased her, caught her by hair and dragged her to the assembly. In assembly, she repeated her question and cried for help and rightful answer from her husbands and all elderly guardians of *dharma*. They all were speechless with their eyes and heads hung down in shame, guilt and remorse.

Of course, there was one voice, that of Vikarna from the camp of Kauravas, who despite being much younger to Duryodhana picked up courage and un-veiled the plot, trickery and unlawful means of victory in the game. He also told fearlessly that Draupadi is unlawfully won and it is against *dharma* to subject her to such a humiliation.

Calling him a traitor in the family, Karna snubbed him. He further ordered Duḥśāsana to disrobe the Pandavas and Draupadi as now the clothes they wear are also the properties of Kauravas.

Pandavas surrendered their upper garments. Encouraged by the words of Karna, Duḥśāsana, started pulling the sari of Draupadi to disrobe her. In utter anxiety, anguish and anger she cried aloud in

earth-trembling voice for help in the assembly. But it was all in vain. Finally she begged for succor from the divine hands of all merciful Krishna:

Surrendering unconditionally for protection helpless Draupadi cried aloud:

गोविन्द द्वारकावासिन् कृष्ण गोपीजनप्रिय॥

कौरवैः परिभूतां मां किं न जानासि केशव।

हे नाथ हे रमानाथ ब्रजनाथ आर्तिनाशन।

कौरवार्णवमग्रां मामुद्धरस्व जनार्दन॥ महाभारत. सभा. ६८. ४१-४२॥

“O Govinda! O Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa the resident of Dvārakā, O Keśava: the heart-throb of the Gopis! Don't you know this wicked Kaurava is molesting me? O Lord! O the consort of Rāmā (Lakṣmi), O the Lord of Vrajabhumi! O Janārdana : the dispeller of sufferings, I am drowning in the ocean of Kaurava's torture. Please come fast and save my soul.

कृष्ण कृष्ण महायोगिन् विश्वात्मन् विश्वभावन।

प्रपन्नां पाहि गोविन्द कुरुमध्येऽवसीदतीम्॥ महाभारत. सभा. ६८. ४३॥

O Kṛṣṇa! O Mahāyogī O Viśvātmā (the Soul of the Universe), O World favourite, O Govinda! Please protect this surrendered one, the helpless lady, the torture-suffering woman.

कृष्णं च विष्णुं च हरिं नरं च त्राणाय विक्रोशति राजसेनी॥ महाभारत. सभा. ६८. ४६॥

Broken and forlorn Yajnasena-Kumāri Kṛṣṇā (Draupadi) for self-protection, was crying out aloud – Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Hari, etc. names of Lord in the assembly.

“Do not desert me, O Lord, I seek sole refuge in You. Please protect me from the tyranny of these shameless Kauravas.”

Responding to her supplication the Lord rushed to her rescue, with an endless supply of *saris*, till Duḥśāsana fell flat on the floor in utter fatigue. Thus the Lord saved and protected Draupadi from total humiliation and open molestation. The Lord was, as He always is, for the seeking souls, eagerly waiting for helping and protecting Draupadi, which teaches a universal lesson to all troubled refuge-seekers, who are lost and forlorn.

6. Śaraṇāgati of Rṣi Durvāsā

Śrāddhadeva-Mauni's son was Nabhaga. Nabhaga's son was Nabhāga, whose son was the great devotee-king Ambarīṣa. As the chakravarti king of *akhila-jagat*, he ruled over the whole world. Despite great responsibility and multifarious administrative duties and executive works, he had no attachment to anything. He had mentally dedicated everything to Śrī Hari and regarded all his possessions as the wealth of Lord. He, even in midst of all these ownership, used to remain fully engrossed in the devotion and worship of Lord Śrī Hari most meticulously and diligently. For pūjā-worship and related rituals, he himself used to do everything without seeking help of his servants and brāhmin-preists. Whether it was drawing water for bathing Lord's icon, or plucking flowers and preparing garlands from them or cooking food for offering God etc. he himself used to do. He, therefore, was known as '*ātmānivedi-bhakta*', as the one who has totally given himself up to Lord.

येत्वम्भरीषवद् भक्ताः स्युरिहात्मनिवेदिनः ।

तैश्च मानसपूजान्तं कार्यमुक्तक्रमेण वै ॥ शिक्षापत्री ५५ ॥

"The devotees who want to become great *ātmānivedi*-devotee like the king Ambarīṣa should do all his *pūjā* rituals in their order after first completing the *mānasa-pūjā* (meditative-mental worship) and then only they should engage in other works of life."

प्रोक्तेस्ते निर्गुणा भक्ता निर्गुणस्य हरेर्यतः ।

सम्पन्नात् तत्क्रिया सर्वा भवन्त्येव हि निर्गुणाः ॥ शिक्षापत्री ५९ ॥

The Lord Śrī Hari is *nirguṇa* i.e. beyond three *guṇas* (namely *sattva-rajas-tamas* of *māyā - prakṛti*) and hence, the devotees so related with such a Lord Hari are also *nirguṇa* and their all acts too are *nirguṇa* i.e. not at all bondage-causing three-*guṇa*-related-worldly acts.)

Pleased with his unflinching, undivided, exclusive *nirguṇa* bhakti, Lord Śrī Hari placed his Sudarśana cakra (divine-discuss) in the protection of him.

Once upon a time, Ambarīṣa and his wife had taken an year-long vow of observing *nirjala ekādaśī* fast every fortnight. Ekādaśī fast was to be observed without taking water, accompanied by only a single meal on the preceding (*daśami*) and succeeding (*dwādaśī*) days. The couple spent their every *ekādaśī* (day and night) in pūjā worship

and singing and hearing God Śrī Hari's glory. At the end of the year, the vow was to be concluded on the *dwādaśī* day in the bright fortnight of the month of Kārtika. So, the couple went early morning to the river Kālindī, took the ceremonial bath, entered Madhuvana, did both *mānasa-pujā* and ritualistic elaborate *pujā*-worship of Śrī Hari. Thereafter, the king charitably gave varieties of gifts and cows to brāhmins and destitute.

The couple was about to conclude the fast, but suddenly the sage Durvāsā came there. Ambarīṣa and his wife stood up and accorded a warm welcome and honourable reception to sage and humbly requested him to join for the meal. Durvāsā accepted the request with a word "I shall just finish my bath and join for the midday meal." Saying so, he left for the river Kālindī. He took a dip in Kālindī and got lost in deep meditation underwater. He did not return for a long time. Now only one *ghatikā-muhūrta* (24 minutes) was left for *dwādaśī-tithi* to break the fast by taking meal to earn the full merit (*puṇya*) of the year long vow (*vrata*). The couple must conclude fast by taking their meal in time before the expiry of *dwādaśī*. Now, if they did not take the meal, the yearlong vow would go in vain, and if they took the meal before feeding the invited guest, it would hurt Durvāsā and earn his rageful wrath. Oh! What a dilemma! The king, therefore, consulted the pious priests and on their advice, the couple took a few drops of water with a *Tulasi* leaf after offering prayer to Lord Śrī Hari. This would mean both a conclusion of fast officially and at the same time amount to not taking meal without serving it first to the invited guest-sage.

The moment the ceremony of concluding the fast was over, the sage Durvāsā arrived from the riverfront. He came to know through his yogic power that the king has concluded the fast by taking drops of water. He took it as an insult and got terribly enraged. Without probing into the reason, he just pulled out a hair of his matted lock from his head and banged it on the ground. Lo! There arose a *Kṛtyā*: a frightful fierce female demon. The demoness rushed to Ambarīṣa to finish him off. Muttering the name of Śrī Hari, with folded palms Ambarīṣa stood unperturbed in perfect coolness. But the Sudarśana-cakra (the divine discus) could not tolerate such an attack on Ambarīṣa, and hence, it instantaneously destroyed *Kṛtyā* and chased Durvāsā to destroy him too. Seeing the Sudarśana-cakra

of Lord Śrī Hari following him Durvāsā ran to find protection from Cakra to different deities. But who can ever save him from the divine discuss of the Lord Almighty? When all efforts went in vain, he rushed at the door of Brahmā and requested him to come to his rescue. Brahmā said "Sorry, it is not in my hands, please excuse me, after all, it is the discuss of Lord Hari". Confused and helpless Durvāsā ran to Kailās to seek help from his father, Śiva. Śiva told him, "look, this is invincible discuss of Śrī Hari. We are like puppets in the hands of Śrī Hari. So, only alternative left for you is to go to Him alone. Being totally dejected in finding shelter from Lord Śiva, Durvāsā ultimately rushed to Vaikuṇṭha – the divine abode of Lord Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, Who resides there eternally together with His divine consort Śrī-Lakṣmī. Terribly scared of the sight of discuss he ran madly to Vaikuntha and fell at the feet of Śrī Hari with a request: "O! Lord of gods, inadvertently have I offended your great devotee Ambariṣa, and thus invited this trouble. Please pardon me and save me from this Cakra of Yours." Śrī Hari smiled and averred: "O Brahmin! Sorry, I cannot do anything in this matter."

अहं भक्तपराधीनो ह्यस्वतंत्र एव द्विज ।

साधुधिग्रस्तहृदयो भक्तैर्भक्तजन प्रिय ॥ श्रीमद्भागवतम् ९.४.६३ ॥

"I am the lover of My true devotees. The devotee is dearest to Me. I am as if freedom-less slave before him. My heart is in the sway and grip of My true devotee. I am subordinate to him."

नाहमात्मानमाशंसे मन्दकैः साधुभिर्विना ।

श्रियं चात्यन्तिकीं ब्रह्मन् येषां गतिरहं परा ॥ श्रीमद्भागवतम् ९.४.६४ ॥

"O wise Brāhmaṇa, but for My true saintly devotees for whom I am the only God of their life, I don't enjoy My supreme bliss nor My supreme opulence without them.

You may think, why? Let Me tell you,"

यो दारागारपुत्राप्तप्राणान् वित्तमिमं परम् ।

हित्वा मां शरणं याताः कथं तांस्त्यक्तुमुत्सहे ॥ श्रीमद्भागवतम् ९.४.६५ ॥

"My saintly devotees, having abandoned their homes, wives, children, relations, wealth and their very lives have taken pledge to serve Me devoutly and that too also without any desire for material well-being in this life and the life after. They have sought refuge in none else but Me. So, how do I ever forsake My ties with such

मत्सेवया प्रतीतं ते सालेक्यादि चतुष्टयम्।

नेच्छन्ति सेवया पूर्णाः कृतोऽन्यत् कालैर्विपुतम्॥ श्रीमद्भागवतम् ९.४.६७॥

“My saintly devotees are always content with worshipful-loving service unto Me. They do not crave for four-fold (*sālōkya*, *sāmīpya*, *sārṣṭi* and *sārūpya*) forms of liberation. Of course, they achieve all of them just because of their unmotivated service unto Me. (i.e. I grant them sheerly out of grace.) When this is the case, how do they ever would desire material happiness of higher lokas (celestial planes) which are subject to destruction by Kāla?”

The Lord Śrī Hari, then advised the brāhmaṇa-ṛṣi Durvāsā,

“Listen to me carefully. This is an advice for your own good and protection. By misusing your yogic powers as a prowess to punish king Ambariṣa (by hurling a *Kṛtyā*), you have hurt and offended the great devotee-saint (and thereby Me too). Now since you have offended My devotee-saint who is ever protected by My Sudarśana Cakra, you will have to go to him alone, seek refuge in him humbly, and beg pardon of him and request protection from him. Then alone, this divine discuss will get pacified and leave you at peace. So, go to him without any delay or pride. No one except Ambariṣa now can call back the Cakra.”

The Lord Śrī Hari, then added *yatastaṁ yātu vai bhavān* – “Durvāsā, go and seek him (i.e. King Ambariṣa) alone” as your refuge to free yourself from this self-created catastrophe!

On the advice of Lord Śrī Hari, as a last resort, Durvāsā who was scorched by the heat of the Sudarśana-cakra went back to Ambariṣa and with sorrow-filled heart, fell at the feet of Ambariṣa and clasped his feet humbly with a sigh, “Please protect me.”

At the humble gesture of the great *ṛṣi* Durvāsā, the king Ambariṣa got ashamed, embarrassed and non-plussed. Ambariṣa then with folded hands offered a devout prayer singing glory of the Sudarśana-cakra, and requested the cakra: “If I still have in my heart the same measure of reverence, love and honour for the great *ṛṣi* Durvāsā, then may this Cakra recede and remit.”

“विधेहि भद्राणि तदनुग्रहो हि नः।” 9.5.9

“Kindly grant safety to this *brāhmaṇa* *ṛṣi* Durvāsā for that would be an act of grace to us.”

The Cakra then desisted from its course and withdrew its energies. Durvāsā, in all humility thanked the king and uttered the

words of praise: “Today I realized the true greatness of a Vaiṣṇava, O king. I know, I have offended you, but still you have with your large heart and magnanimity, offered prayer for my well-being and rescued me. I am sure, there is nothing impossible for a Vaiṣṇava bhakta who has overpowered the heart of Viṣṇu Himself and have found a place in His heart. O kind king, I humbly salute you for saving my life disregarding my offence.”

The king then fell at the feet of Durvāsā. With prostrations and humble words he requested the ṛṣi to take his meal. The ṛṣi did so very happily and made the king and his wife take their meals. Thereafter, blessing the couple gracefully, he left for *Brahmaloka*.

7. Śaraṇāgati of Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣi-patnis

Once upon a time Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma together with a band of their companion cowherd boys (gopa-bāla) went far in the interior of the forest near a river. They jumped into river and refreshed themselves. They were tired and worked up. So, Kṛṣṇa’s boy-friends told him: “We are terribly hungry. Please do something to satisfy our hunger.” The summer was very fierce and heat was scorching. So, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma took the team of boys from the shade of one tree to another, till they settled under a huge tree giving thick wide shade, and in pensive state Kṛṣṇa spoke: “O companions, look at these trees. How noble and benevolent they are! Look at the vast number of services, sacrifices and gifts they render to living beings. The trees suffer and tolerate scorching sun-heat, heavy rains, hot winds, chill, frost, snow, storms, lightening and the axe of thankless men. Despite all these sufferings, they never complain. They do not send any one disappointed. They give protection and shelter to all, and in addition, they offer their leaves, buds, flowers, fruits, fragrance, juice, roots, wood for warming and cooking and finally their ashes for ritualistic, medicinal and chemical purposes. Of all lives on earth, their living is truly justified. They have justified their birth by being good to one and all. Aren’t they really wise and noble and benevolent? We the humans must learn lesson from their exemplary life and spend our life, labour and resources for the well-being of all.” The companions of Kṛṣṇa heard all that patiently, but because of the pangs of hunger, cowherd boys (gopa-bālas), then again told Kṛṣṇa: “We are terribly hungry. Why don’t you get us some food to

eat?" Kṛṣṇa paused for a while looked around, and said: Look at there. Do you see there the smoke rising up in the sky? Go there. Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis are doing yajña-sacrifices. Go to them and tell them Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma has asked for cooked food and rice for them and us, as we all are hungry."

The gopa-bālas ran in that direction and standing at the door of the hall of yajna-sālā, they offered their salutations to them with folded palms and respectfully conveyed the message. But, Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis, as if not heard, kept offering their oblations (āhutiḥ) as "Aum Kṛṣṇāya swāhā". "Aum Vāsudevāya Swāhā". "Aum Nārāyaṇāya swāhā." So, the restless-hungry boys then repeated the request loudly but respectfully: "O, pious, virtuous, worshipful Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis, we are the cowherd companions-cum-servants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, who are grazing their cattles there, near that tree. They are very hungry. They have requested us to beg some cooked-food items from you, which you have them here in plenty. Blessing be on you! Please spare some food for them and their team, for you are very learned Vedic scholars and knower of dharma and Vedic karma."

Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis did not pay any heed to them. They did not take notice of their presence, nor listened to their words. They did neither say yes, nor no. They just kept offering their oblations (āhutiḥ). What was the reason? Their aim and destination of life here and hereafter was very narrow and un-thoughtful. They were indulging in petty hopes of accumulating merit (*punya*) and thereby ascending to *Svargaloka* (heavenly abode), without realizing that at the perish of the stock of *punya*, falling back from *Svarga* onto earthly life full of pain and suffering is certain. Thus blindly they were following the Vedic-yajna-karma obliviscent (unmindful and unaware) of the fact that the Supreme God, whom they are trying to please and attain Svarga, Himself is perceptibly present around in a manifest form in the guise of the child – Śrī Kṛṣṇa. On the contrary, they out of pride of superiority of their Brāhmin-hood were deeming Kṛṣṇa as a common man.

After waiting for some time with repeated requests, when cowherd boys did not find any response from Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis, they returned empty handed disappointed and told all about it to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa laughed at the ignorance of these Veda-committed

learned scholars. He then asked the gopa-bālas to go to the ṛṣi-patnis (i.e. the wives of the Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis) and declared: "Go to them. They will certainly give whatever you ask, moment they will know that I-Śrī Kṛṣṇa has sent you. I know why? They live ever in Me, with their heart and soul constantly aligned and attuned in Me. Although they haven't seen Me so far, but they know Me as the manifest God Who is worthy of all worship and devotion. They are pining to have My darśana and eagerly waiting for the opportunity to serve Me, please Me."

The team of boys went to *ṛṣi-patnis* (wives of Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis) conveyed their request for cooked food items in the name of Kṛṣṇa. So far, ṛṣi-patnis had only heard of Kṛṣṇa as incarnate God. So these devout ṛṣi-patnis moment they heard the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and came to know that Kṛṣṇa is in neighborhood, got so overjoyed that they jumped up and rose and immediately with all the best food-items and delicacies well-covered in golden platters emerged from the yajna hall. They got lost into their life long cherished wish of meeting and uniting with Kṛṣṇa in person. Their devotion welled up to the new uncontrollable height. Seeing this scene, their husbands (i.e. Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis) tried to prevent them. They were joined by their sons and relatives who also threatened them of social bay-cot and ex-communication. Ignoring and defying all threats and protests by husbands, sons, other relatives and strictures of social customs, they rushed out of the hall to see and serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They ran to meet Kṛṣṇa, as if like a river rushing to meet the ocean. Yes, one of them, who was forcibly stopped from going to Kṛṣṇa fell down dead and her soul got united in Śrī Kṛṣṇa with celestial body. She got emancipated to dwell in Kṛṣṇa in His abode for ever.

The ṛṣi-patnis, saw Śrī Kṛṣṇa from a distance as sauntering under a grove dressed in golden silken loin cloth round his waist, a peacock feather on His head, water-lilly behind both the ears and a garland of flowers round His neck. They rushed to Him. They hugged and kissed and fondled Him to the content of their heart.

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa came to know that they have come in defiance of their husbands and sons and they have ignored all social customs and barriers for My sake. He spoke gently: "I welcome you all. You are highly blessed ladies! I know, you were longing to see Me for a long time as the supreme Object of your devotion. Not

withstanding all hurdles and obstacles you have come to serve Me at My behest. In the *ātman*s of you all, I am the supreme Ātman ever present, and hence, I am your most beloved. Those who care for their ātman with unconditional and undivided devotion (Bhakti) towards Me: the Supreme Ātman without caring for their body, mind, husband, children and wealth are dearest to Me. All other things are dear on account of and for the sake of ātman and the Ātman of all ātman. Now, you may serve the food and go. Now that you have seen Me and enjoyed My company go back to your husbands and help them in the conduct of their Yajña.

The brahmaṇa-ṛṣi patnis replied:

मेवं विभोऽस्मि भवान् गदितुं नृशंसं सत्यं कुरुष्व निगमं तव पादमूलम्।

प्राप्ता वयं तुल्यसिदाम पदावसृष्टं केशैर्निबोद्धमतिलग्य समस्तामन्ध्रन्॥ १०-२३-२९॥

गृह्णन्ति नो न पतयः पितरो सुता वा न भ्रातृप्रान्धु सुहृदः कृत एव चान्ये।

तस्माद् भवत्प्रपदयोः पतितात्मनां नो नान्या भवेद् गतिरिन्दम तद् विधेहि॥ १०-२३-३०॥

“O Lord Almighty, it is not becoming of You to say such harsh unkind words. Please do not utter such cruel words. You must vindicate the Vedic words of promise that ‘one who attains You, doesn’t have to return to this world of suffering’. Don’t you know that we have left our homes, families and all relatives remaining ever united in You at Your lotus-feet. You also know that they will not accept us back even if we are asked to join them. When this is the case, how would anyone be ready to give us shelter? Therefore, please grant us the permission to remain with You permanently our sole and Supreme Refuge. You should fulfill your promise of reciprocating your devotee manifoldly in kind. So, we simply wish to remain in forest here with garlands of Tulasi leaves which You may playfully kick away with Your lotus feet. We are ready to renounce all our ties and attachments with material world. So, O chastiser of enemies, please fulfil our desire of remaining with you. Because after having surrendered to You in all totality at Your feet, we have no other destination.”

Extremely pleased by the devotion and dedication of these noble ladies, Śrī Kṛṣṇa assured : “I promise, your husbands, sons and relatives will not keep any grudge against you. They will not find any fault with you. My grace and blessings are with you. By My will, all people and even gods shall approve of your conduct. Direct

contact or physical presence is not necessary. That alone does not prompt and promote love and devotion and intimacy. Just surrender your mind and heart totally to Me. Think of Me with your heart and soul. You shall soon obtain Me speedily and you will attain My state.”

The Brahmaṇa-ṛṣi-patnis returned undoubtingly to their husbands. None of them showed a sign of displeasure or complain. The noble ladies were surprised to find themselves well-received by all of them, as promised and foretold by Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa then distributed and served nice food-items and delicacies given by ṛṣi patnis to the whole team of companions (gopa-bālas) and after having fed them, He himself ate them at last. They then drank water from the river and left the place.

There in the yajña hall, the Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis later on realized their blunder and repented. It was too late. They out of fear of Kamsa and also on account of their wrong notions of *mokṣa*, did not run (like their wives) to Brindāvana. So, they had to remain content with worshiping Kṛṣṇa at home. They cursed themselves for missing the rare golden opportunity.

The Brahmaṇa-ṛṣis who knew the Vedas by heart were proficient in explaining every word of each mantra, but did not know the intent and implications of them. They knew from the Vedas that Brahman the Ultimate Reality as God is the destination and is the bestower of the fruits of the dharma and yajna-karma which leads one to the life in Svarga. But, they could not know the denotative reference of Brahman as now visible in incarnate God manifest in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, i.e. they could not recognize the pratyakṣa svarupa of Bhagawana as Bhagawana. Of what avail all these learning and yajna-karma is? Aren't the ṛṣi-patnis more intelligent and lucky? Yes, because they were not conditioned to any self-conceived set of standards. They, with their love and devotion and openness of mind and heart were luckily able to recognize God as God and unite themselves with Him. God walking on earth in human guise is more difficult to accept and assess as such. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* –

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम्।

परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम्॥ भगवद्गीता ९-११॥ and

जन्म कर्म मे दिव्यं एवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः।

त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन॥ भगवद्गीता ४-९॥

“Since I am dwelling in human form (as incarnate God on earth), the dull-witted men disregard (i.e. think low of) Me. They do not know my divine transcendental nature as the supreme Lord of all beings.” (*Gītā* 9.11) And “a man who knows Me truly as God, Whose birth, body and actions as divine, is not reborn after the death of his body. He certainly comes to Me, i.e. he attains Me (he attains final emancipation).” (*Gītā* 4-9)

The Brāhmaṇa-ṛṣis thus failed to enjoy their privilege of seeing God face to face and enjoy the bliss of His company on account of their narrow vision and conception of God and the fear of Kamsa, while ṛṣi-patnis were fortunate to enjoy it.

Note

¹ Sixteen spokes, are *pañca-viśayas*, *pañca jñānendriyas*, *pañca karmendriy*’s and mind.

Section II

Śaraṇāgati Episodes from Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa

PROF. A. BIHARADWAJ

The *Rāmāyaṇa* and its sister epic, the *Mahābhārata* constitute a veritable treasure - trove of Indian lore, learning, legends and mythology, both religious and secular. These two great ornate poems, the creation of the heroic age, constitute the national epics of the Hindus. For the last many centuries, these two epics have exercised a profound influence on India's moral and religious living and thinking, and also on all types of creative expressions. Purāṇic in nature, these two great works have been quite popular among the masses; They have percolated through all the strata of Hindu society in the forms of literature, songs, sculpture, painting and classical and folk performing arts.

It is said about *Rāmāyaṇa* that –

यावत्स्यास्यन्ति गिरयः सरितश्च महीतले । तावद्रामायणकथा लेखेषु प्रचरिष्यति ॥

Inspiration from *Rāmāyaṇa* story flourishes in this world so long as the mountains stand and rivers flow on the earth, i.e. to say that it will be everlasting. Now let us come to the real *Śaraṇāgati* episodes in *Rāmāyaṇa*.

8. Śaraṇāgati of Brahmā and the other Devatās

On the banks of the Sarayu River stood the beautiful city of Ayodhyā. In the city, there were magnificent palaces decorated with precious stones. Spires of great temples rose above the city as if to touch the sky. For protection, the city was surrounded by a great moat. The people of Ayodhyā were peace-loving and happy. No one was ignorant or poor. Everyone had faith in God and read the scriptures on a regular basis. Each one knew his or her role in society. The Brahmins devoted their lives to studying the sacred texts. The rulers and warriors governed and protected the city. The farmers and merchants fed and clothed the citizens. Yet, all was not well in Ayodhyā. Daśaratha, the king was unhappy. Although he was very old, he had no son to inherit his throne. One day the king called

upon his priest Vasiṣṭha. "Vasiṣṭha," he said. "I am growing old. I long for a son, a son who will take my place on the throne." The priest knew all too well that his king needed to have a son. He replied, "Daśaratha, you will have sons. I shall perform a sacred rite to please the gods." Excited by this wonderful news, the king ran to tell his three wives Sumitra, Kaikeyi, and Kausalya, "I will have sons!"

At the same moment many of the gods were growing more and more angry with Rāvaṇa, the ruler of the *rākṣasas*, or demons. Rāvaṇa was no ordinary looking demon. He had ten heads and twenty arms. He also had remarkable powers. But he was using his power to prevent the gods and holy men from performing sacred rituals. This was a terrible insult to all who were holy.

ततो देवाः स गन्धर्वाः सिद्धाश्च परमर्षयः । भागप्रतिग्रहार्थं वै समवेता यथा विधि । बाल. १५-४ ।

The (various) gods (including celestial Brahmā) accompanied by Gāndharvas (celestial musicians), siddhas and greatest of seers assembled there to accept in person their share of offerings according to the (established) procedure.

ताः समेत्य यथान्यायं तस्मिन् सदसि देवताः । अब्रुर्वल्लोककर्तारं ब्रह्माणं वचनं ततः । बाल. १५-५ ।

Approaching Brahmā, the maker of the universe in that very assembly congregated for the sacrifice according to their (respective rank) the aforesaid divinities present there addressed the prayer:

भगवन्स्त्वत्प्रासेन रावणो नाम राक्षसः । सर्वान् नो बाधते वीर्याच्छासितुं तं न शक्नुमः ।

By dint of the prowess acquired through your grace, O lord, the ogre named Rāvaṇa is molesting us all. We cannot subdue him.

तन्महन्त्रो भयं तस्माद् राक्षसाद् घोरदर्शनात् । वधार्थं तस्य भगवन्प्रायं कर्तुमर्हसि ।। बाल. १५-११

Therefore, we are very much afraid of that ogre of frightful Traits. Be pleased O lord, to devise some means of putting an end to him.

त्वां नियोजयामहे विष्णो लेकानां हितकाम्यया । राजो दशरथस्य त्वमयोध्याधिपतेर्विभो ।।

विष्णो पुत्रत्वमागच्छ कृत्वात्मानं चतुर्विधम्। तत्र त्वं मानुषो भूत्वा प्रवृद्धं लोककण्टकम्॥

वधार्थं वयमायाताः तस्य वै मुनिभिः सह। सिद्धगन्धर्वयक्षाश्च ततस्त्वां शरणं गताः।

त्वं गतिः परमा देव सर्वेषां नः परंतप। वधाय देवशत्रूणां नृणां लोके मनः कुरु। (रा. प्रा. का.- १५-१९॥)

With intent to ensure the good of the worlds, O Vishnu we are going to lay a burden on you. Splitting yourself up into four personalities O lord play you the role of a son of the munificent King Dasaratha. Appearing in a human form O Lord you may please slay Rāvaṇa. For that purpose only we have come and have sought you as the protector. You are the supreme resort of us all. Therefore, make up your mind to descend into the mortal plane for the destruction of the enemies of gods.

Thus devas approached Lord Viṣṇu, surrendered to him, to protect the devas and ṛsis from the clutches of Rāvaṇa. They took refuge in Lord Viṣṇu i.e. Performed *śaraṇāgati*. Here the fruit of surrendering is Rāvaṇa's death. This reiterates that *Śaraṇāgati* can be performed for achieving any motive i.e. material or spiritual goals.

Having known Rāvaṇa's actions, Viṣṇu, the protector of the universe, decided: 'it is the time to do something.' But what to do was the question. Years ago Rāvaṇa was granted a boon, or promise. This boon protected him from gods and demons. How then, Viṣṇu wondered, could Rāvaṇa be stopped? Viṣṇu thought, "Rāvaṇa, in his arrogance, protected himself only from those beings whom he thought could hurt him. He failed to protect himself from humans and monkeys." Viṣṇu decided to be born as a human who can kill Rāvaṇa. The gods and holy men were pleased with his decision. Viṣṇu sent a messenger to king Daśaratha with *payasam*, a sweet made of milk and rice, laced with a special potion. The messenger said, "Give each of the three wives this drink. It is a boon that will bring sons." Then the messenger disappeared. The king gave each of his wives part of the drink. No sooner had his wives finished, than each shone with the glow of a divine being in their womb. There was great rejoicing in the city when four sons were born to their king. Their names were Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, and Satrugna. Even as infants, everyone noticed that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were inseparable.

It was as if they were one life in two bodies. All four sons grew to be intelligent men. They learned the holy scriptures well. They were devoted to the welfare of others. Daśaratha was finally happy. He enjoyed watching his sons grow before his eyes. He did not say it in so many words, but he did have a special place in his heart for Rāma.

9. *Śaraṇāgati of Lakṣmaṇa*

Now the king was growing older. He noticed omens suggesting his end was near. 'I have lived long enough,' he thought. 'I must make it sure that my throne goes to Rāma, the most worthy of my sons. What a great blessing it would be to see him as king, before I go to heaven.' 'Then it will be done,' Daśaratha concluded, 'I shall step down and Rāma shall be made king.' The king told everyone about his decision. He informed the priests to begin the sacred rites that would allow Rāma to assume the throne of Ayodhyā. Kaikeyi, the last and youngest of the king's three wives, had heard of the decision to make Rāma the king while Daśaratha was still living. This decision pleased her.

But Manthara, a maidservant, did not want Rāma to be the king. If she could somehow convince Kaikeyi to change the king's mind, her position at the palace would be secure. That evening, she spoke to Kaikeyi in secret. "If Rāma takes the throne, you would lose all your control over the king. If Rāma is crowned, his mother will control of the kingdom. Your rule will come to an end. Awake. Act now. You must convince Daśaratha that it is your son who should be the king." Kaikeyi got convinced by Manthara. She decided to see Daśaratha. She tried everything to convince Daśaratha to listen to her. "Daśaratha," Kaikeyi began, "Do you remember that fateful day I saved your life in battle? Do you remember how I stopped your runaway chariot. " "Yes," replied the king. "And do you remember what you said after I saved your life?" Without waiting for an answer, she said, " Oh my powerful king and beloved husband, you promised me two boons. Hear my boons now so that they may be granted." The king reluctantly listened to his wife's requests. "First," she began. "I wish to have my son, Bharata, placed upon the throne of Ayodhyā. Second, I want Rāma banished from the kingdom

for a period of no less than fourteen years.” The king fell to his knees and begged his young wife not to hold him to these dreadful wishes. As a righteous and honest man, he knew he could not go back on his word. Yet, he couldn’t bear to ask Rāma to forsake the throne and go away for fourteen years. He turned pale and speechless.

Kaikeyi told Rāma the terrible news. Rather than argue, Rāma comforted his father. “Father, your word is law. I shall do whatever you bid. It is the sacred duty of a son to respect his father.” Then, he turned to his own mother Kausalya, and requested, “Please be sure that father installs Bharata as crown prince.” Rāma knelt and touched the feet of his parents respectfully. He stood, turned and left the palace. Lakshmana declared, “I shall destroy anyone who opposes your right to the throne..” Rāma responded, “No, Lakshmana. You know it is my sacred duty, my dharmā, to fulfill these wishes.” Prostrating before Rāma, Lakshmana holding the feet of Rāma looking at Sītā tells, “I am going to follow you in the forest. I, carrying the bow and arrow in my hand, shall go first to prepare everything for you both.”

सम्राटुश्चरणौ गाढं निषीडय रघुनन्दनः। सीतामुवाचातिथशां राघवं स महाव्रतम्।रा. अयो. ३१-२॥

Tightly pressing the feet of his (eldest) brother, Lakṣmaṇa the light of the Rāhus, spoke as follows to Sītā, who enjoyed great celebrity as also to Śrī Rāma who had undertaken great vow”

Here the “*Sitāmuṇvāca*” is considered to be the indication of *Puruṣakāra* intersession. Though Lakshmana was holding the feet of Rāma whom he addresses through Sītā with the hope that her will, would be unfailing. Lakshmana performs *Śaraṇāgati* to Rāma. Here the fruit of surrender is to follow Him and he gets it. This confirms the fact that “whoever performs *śaraṇagati* gets his desire fulfilled, provided he has the full faith in his master and has done complete self-surrender”. Rāma tried to convince Sītā to remain, but she said sobbing, “And, it is my duty, my dharma, as a wife to be at your side. How can I live without you? I must join you. If not I shall be a fish out of water. Rāma tried hard to convince them to stay but they were insistent. “Then, Sītā, come with me,” Rāma said. Rāma also gave his brother permission to join them.

कुरुष्व मामनुचरं वैधर्म्यं नेह विद्यते । कृताथोऽहं भविष्यामि तवचार्यः प्रकल्प्यते ॥ अयो. ३१-२४ ॥

Therefore, kindly make me your attendant, there will be no unrighteousness in it. I shall thereby have accomplished my object and your purpose too will be adequately served.

भयन्स्तु सह वेदेह्या गिरिसानुषु रंस्यसे । अहं सर्वं करिष्यामि जाग्रतः स्वपतश्च ते ॥ अयोध्या ३१-२७ ॥

You will sport with the Sita (a princess of vidēha clan) on mountain tops. I shall do everything for you whether you are waking or sleeping.

As the three left the palace, they cast away their royal robes and put on the clothes of hermits. The people of Ayodhyā wept as Rāma, Sītā and Lakshmana passed from the city. As the chariot went from sight, Daśaratha cried, “Rāma! Rāma! Do not leave me.” In time, Daśaratha lost the will to live. His heart simply gave out. Ayodhyā mourned the loss of their king.

10. Śaraṇagati of Bharata

In a few days, Rāma, Lakshmana and Sītā crossed the river Ganges searching for a land undisturbed and isolated from everyone. Soon they reached Chitrakoot, a beautiful place with many trees and streams. It was paradise. They built a small hut near a stream. Several days had passed. Lakshmana, while hunting in the forest, heard the pounding of a thousand hooves. He climbed a tree to see whose army was approaching. To his amazement, he saw the lead horseman carrying the flag of Ayodhyā. Bharata had found his brothers. Lakshmana thought that his brother had come to kill them.

Lakshmana told Rāma: “A great army is approaching led by our brother, Bharata. I will kill him with my own hands.” “Don’t be a fool,” Rāma said. “He is our brother and he is the king. We must welcome him.” Bharata embraced his brothers. He cried, “My heart is filled with grief and shame. Grief for the loss of our noble father; Shame for being offered the throne that you rightfully deserve. Come back to Ayodhyā and be our king.” “That cannot be done,” Rāma said. “I gave my word and I shall stay here for fourteen years and no less. Then and only then will I return.”

आक्रोशं मम मातुश्च प्रमृज्य पुरुषर्षभ । अद्य तत्र भवन्तं च पितरं रक्ष किल्बिषात् ॥

Wiping off the obloquy attaching to me as well as to my mother O jewel among men, save our esteemed father as well me as well as on all our kinsfolk even as lord siva does on all created beings.

शिरसात्वाभियाचेहं कुरुष्व करुणां मयि । प्रान्धवेषु च सर्वेषु भवता सार्थमप्यहम् ॥

I implore you with my head bent low: pray take pity on me as well as on all your kinsfolk (even) as Lord Śiva (the Supreme Deity) does on created beings.

Nothing could sway Rāma. “Rāma, my brother,” Bharata declared, “as long as you are in exile, no one shall be king. To ensure this give me your sandals. I will place them on the throne. For the next fourteen years I will serve our land in your name. And, if after those fourteen years, you do not return, I shall walk into a fire and die.” Bharata took the sandals, mounted his horse and left the forest. In Kosala, Bharata put Rāma’s sandals on the red and gold Ayodhyā throne.

Here is Bharata’s *Śaraṇāgati* comes to picture. The Śrīvaiṣṇava ācāryas tried to establish that Bharata’s surrender was successful in spite of the fact that Rāma did not return with him and to strengthen the above he quotes the śloka, which describes the return of Bharata. Here ‘*Aruroharatham hrstah*’ means “Bharata happily climbed his chariot”. Although he was returning to the capital without Rāma, Bharata was happy since he was now Rāma’s representative (slave) and not an independent king anymore. Likewise many incidents from Rāmāyaṇa are quoted and explained to substantiate the view that it is a *‘Śaraṇāgati Śāstra*.

11. *Śaraṇāgati* of Jayanta (Kākāsura)

Several days passed. Rāma, Lakshmana and Sītā walked south until they came upon Daṇḍaka forest. Once a beautiful place, Daṇḍaka was now a barren wasteland. Shreds of bark from dead trees littered the ground. Stumps of trees were all that remained of a once lush forest. The sound of the wind seemed to warn anyone who

approached. At night demons prowled the land in search of flesh. During his forest life Rāma lived with Sītā on a mount Citrakūta for some days. Once Rama being very tired of walking in the forest fell asleep with his head in the lap of Sītā. Taking this chance Jayanta, son of Indra came in the shape of a crow and scratched the breast of Sītā with his claws. Sītā cried and Sri Rāma woke up and saw Jayanta in the shape of a crow. Rāma got angry and shot the *Brahmāstra* (a divine arrow) against Jayanta. Fear of life made him fly though out the whole three worlds. Even Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara were unable to protect him. All the while the divine arrow followed him. No one was able to protect him. Finally, having no go, he came and fell at the feet of Rāma and performed *Śaraṇāgati*.

स पित्रा च परित्यक्तः सुरैश्च समहर्षिभिः । त्रीन्लोकान्संपरिक्रम्य तमेव शरणं गतः ॥ रा. सुं.का. - ३३ ॥

When he was rejected by even his father, gods and rsis, after wandering over the three worlds he came and surrendered Śri Rāma.

सतं निषतितं भूमौ शरण्यः शरणागतम् । वधाहमपि काकुत्स्थः कृपया पर्यपालयत् ॥ रा. सुं.का. - ३४ ॥

On seeing him fallen on the ground helplessly surrendered, out of compassion Lord Rāma protected him even though he is to be killed.

It was actually Sītā who took it with compassion and requested Rama to be considerate and pardon him for the mistake and protect him from his life. Rāma told that the *Brahmāstra* could not go in vain and so the arrow must hit in his right eye. Accordingly, the arrow stuck at his right eye and thus Jayanta lost his right eye and thus he saved his life. Here the fruit of *Śaraṇāgati* is Life for the crow.

Religious men who gave up all worldly comforts and became hermits also lived in the forest. They spoke of the horrors that Rāvaṇa's demons had done. Rāma and Lakshmana promised they would kill all these demons. After ten years, Rāma, Lakshmana and Sītā crossed the Godavari River and reached Panchavati. Here was a magnificent forest, untouched by demons. The air was fragrant with the smell of flowers. Fruit grew on every vine. Birds sang joyfully.

“Let us build a hut here.” Rāma said. Nearby lived the ancient vulture king, Jatāyu. Jatāyu made friends with them and enjoyed guarding Sītā while the brothers hunted.

12. *Śaraṇāgati* of Tārā

Rāma and Lakshmana began their search for Sītā. They entered Kiskindha, the kingdom of the monkeys. Kiskindha was located south of Kosala. Soon they came to a mountain where Sugriva lived. He was the ruler of the monkey kingdom. Hanuman, a devoted follower of Sugriva, guarded the entrance to the kingdom. Seeing the brother's approach, he ordered them to halt. “Who are you?” Hanuman asked. “I am Rāma, the exiled prince of Ayodhyā. This is my brother, Lakshmana. We wish to see your king. I am hoping he can help us find my wife, Sītā. She was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa.” Rāma and Lakshmana met Sugriva. They told their story. Sugriva said, “I, too, am in exile. My brother seized my kingdom and my queen.” Sugriva paused. He thought about Rāma's story. Then said. “Help me regain my throne and I will help you find your wife. One of my people saw Sītā being carried off to Laṅkā. As she passed overhead, she dropped this.” Rāma reached out his hand. It was one of Sītā's ornaments. Tears filled Rāma's eyes. Rāma and Lakshmana did as they were asked. Sugreeva offered his hand as a token of friendship. Congratulating himself as well as his dear and near ones on his having secured the friendship of Śrī Rāma, and sitting on a common bough along with the later, Sugreeva seeks protection from Vālī. Sugreeva Narates him his tale of woe and requests Rāma to get rid of Vālī, his hostile brother. Śrī Rāma promises this.

Śrī Rāma and other remain hiding behind the trees of a grove in the vicinity of Kiṣkindhā. Sugriva implores Śrī Rāma to implement his vow of killing Vālī. Assuring Sugriva that this will be done, Lord Ramachandra encourages the latter to go and challenge his elder brother Vālī and Sugriva does accordingly. Spurning the advice of Tārā and reproaching her Vālī goes forth to meet Sugriva and there ensues a fierce encounter between the two brothers. When however Sugriva is found loosing ground, Vālī is struck with an arrow by Śrī Rama and falls to the ground. Śrī Rāma justifies His action by saying that the punishment meted out to Vālī in the form of taking his life.

for the sin of depriving his own younger brother of his wedded wife, of which Vāli was guilty. Agonised with the grief to hear about the death of her husband, Tārā (wife of Vāli) sallied from Kiṣkindhā to arrive in presence of Vāli. Claspng Vāli to her bosom and wailing piteously for the sake of Aṅgada Tārā resolves upon a fast unto death. Beseeching Aṅgada and others to conduct Tārā surrenders to Sri Rāma and he consoles her to live for the sake of Aṅgada.

निवासवृक्षः साधूनामापन्नानां परा गतिः । आर्तानां संश्रयश्चैव यशसश्चैकमाजनम् ॥ रा. कि.का. १५.१९ ॥

You are the abode for the noble, like a tree for the birds.
You are the refuge of all the troubled people. You are the only
repository fame.

Thus They defeated Sugriva's brother and won back the throne. It was now the rainy season. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa returned to the forest. They could not begin their search for Sītā until the rains stopped in autumn. Rāma grew more depressed. The rain seemed to Rāma like tears from the gods.

13. *Śaraṇāgati* of Vibhīṣaṇa

Vibhīṣaṇa is the younger brother of Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa became the King of Laṅkā. Vibhīṣaṇa and Kumbhakārṇa lived along his brother. Rāvaṇa married Maṇḍodari, Kumbhakārṇa married Vajravālā the daughter of Mahābali and Vibhīṣaṇa married Saraḷā the daughter of Śailūṣa a gandharva. When Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa went to forest with Śītā, Rāvaṇa carried Sītā away to Laṅkā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with the help of monkey army entered Laṅkā. At this time Rāvaṇa called Vibhīṣaṇa together with his ministers to consider the details about the battle with Rāma. Everyone present except Vibhīṣaṇa voted for the battle. Vibhīṣaṇa advised Rāvaṇa to return Sītā the Stolen property and to beg pardon. Rāvaṇa got angry and expelled Vibhīṣaṇa from Srilanka.

Hanumān received a great welcome from his warriors. They hurried back to tell Rāma the good news. By now Rāma had given up all hope of ever seeing Sītā alive again. When Rāma saw Hanumān returning, he ran to him. "I pray you have word of Sītā." Without

saying a word, Hanumān gave Rāma Sītā's jewel. Rāma praised Hanumān for his bravery and said, "You have given me reason to live again." Meanwhile back at Laṅkā palace, Vibhishana, Rāvaṇa's brother, tried to save Sītā's life. "Let her go," he said, "so we can save our kingdom from Rāma's anger." Rāvaṇa responded angrily, "If I return Sītā, I will be ridiculed by all the gods and demons." He warned again, "Do not underestimate Rāma's strength. It is said that Rāma is an incarnation of Viṣṇu sent to earth to destroy all that is unholy. With his powers he will destroy Laṅkā. Why do you tempt such a fate?" "I fear no one," Rāvaṇa roared.

"Then," Vibhishana said, "I can no longer remain in Laṅkā. Save yourself brother." "Then go," shouted Rāvaṇa. "I have no place in my kingdom for the weak and timid." Vibhishana left the palace and magically flew to Rāma. Arriving at his camp, Vibhishana declared, "I am the brother of Rāvaṇa. I tried to convince my brother to return your wife. But he refused and I left Laṅkā. He surrendered to Rāma and said I wish to join you and fight on your side."

सोहं परुषितस्तेन दासवद्भावमानितः । त्यक्त्वा पुत्रांश्च दारांश्च राघवं शरणं गतः । रा. यु. का. - १६ ।।

निवेदयत मां क्षिप्रं राघवाय महात्मने । सर्वलोकशरण्याय विभीषणमुपस्थितम् । रा. यु. का. - १७ ।।

Abandoning my sons and wife when spoken to harshly and treated with disrespect like a slave by him, though wishing him well, I have sought Śri Rāma (a scion of Raghu) as my refuge.

Therefore, communicate to the high souled Śri Rāma who is capable of protecting all the worlds, the fact of myself, Vibhishana being present.

Rāma responded, "Vibhishana, you have rejected evil for good. You are welcomed here." Now Rāma had to make a battle plan. Vibhishana told him that Rāvaṇa and his evil son, Indrajit, had great magical powers. His army was made up of millions of demons. For his honesty and bravery, Rāma promised Vibhishana that he would become the new king of Laṅkā. Here the fruit of *Śaraṇāgati* is gaining Kingdom. The Ācāryās argue that Vibhishana's recourse to Rāma is an example of *Śaraṇāgati* fulfilling all the Angas.

1. The requirement of the first *Āṅga* is satisfied when Vibhishana decides that Rāma alone is the saviour. This *Ānukūlya Sankalpa*

2. His abandonment of his kith and kin and also his native land constitute the second *Āṅga* viz. *Prātikūlya Varjana*
3. His utter humiliation like a slave constitutes his *Kārpanya* - Utter helplessness.
4. He reposes unflinching faith in Rāma as the saviour. This is "*Mahāviśvāsa*" – great faith.
5. When he declares that he has accepted Rāma as the only protector, the fifth *Āṅga* viz. "*Goptrīva Varāṇa*" (choice of Protector-ship) is fulfilled.
6. "*Ātmanikṣepa*" (Surrender of the self) takes place when Vibhiṣaṇa surrenders his self, his pleasures and also his country to Rāma.

For his total surrender, Śrī Rāma, out of compassion gave him abhāya and havind killed Rāvaṇa, also made Vibhishana the new king of Laṅkā. Vibhishana's wife and maidens took Sītā from the garden. A beautiful sari was placed around her. Jewels made her sparkle. A scarlet spot adorned her forehead. Sītā could not wait to see her victorious husband. Rāma entered the palace and Sītā bowed at his feet. He felt both love and sorrow for his wife. "We shall return to Ayodhyā," he said.

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